

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPER

The Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act

LAW AND PURPOSE

The Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act, passed by the 2003 legislature, was created to provide parents with specific information about their child's educational progress; provide parents with comprehensive information about their choices and opportunities for involvement in their child's education; and to provide a framework for building and strengthening partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, district school superintendents, and other personnel. This act creates section 1002.23 F.S. and also amends portions of current law to conform to the intent of the act.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

After more than 30 years, research continues to be positive and convincing - families have a major influence on their children's academic achievement in school and throughout life. When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college or career, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive, their children tend to do well in school and in life. Students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.

Programs and special efforts by schools to engage families are related to strong and consistent improvement in academics. Students in schools with highly rated parent partnership programs made greater gains on state tests than those in schools with lower rated programs. In schools where teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents, test scores grew at a rate 40% higher than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach. These findings hold across all family income levels and backgrounds.

How do higher performing schools engage families and community? Although there are many different successful programs and strategies for engaging families, schools that succeed in engaging families from diverse backgrounds share three key practices. These schools focus on building trusting collaborative relationships; recognize, respect and address families' needs as well as cultural differences; and embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared.

Henderson, A., & Berla, N. (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, [National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools](#).

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1. OVERVIEW

1.0 What does the Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act require from school districts?

The act creates section 1002.23 F.S., which requires districts to:

- Adopt rules that promote family and community involvement.
- Develop and disseminate a written parent guide, written in parent friendly language.
- Develop and distribute a parental involvement self-assessment checklist.
- Submit an annual report to the State Board of Education showing compliance with the law and documenting the district's success in achieving improved services to families.

The act also amends other sections of the law:

- Amends section 1001.42, Florida Statutes (Powers and duties school board), to conform to the requirements in the new act.
- Amends section 1001.51, Florida Statutes (Duties and responsibilities of district school superintendent), to require district school superintendents to fully support and cooperate in the implementation of the new act.
- Amends section 1001.54, Florida Statutes (Duties of school principals), to require principals to fully support and cooperate in the implementation of the new act.
- Amends section 1002.20, Florida Statutes (K-12 student and parent rights), to state that parents of public school students must receive accurate and timely information regarding their child's academic progress and must be informed of ways that they can help their child succeed in school.
- Amends section 1003.33, Florida Statutes (Report cards; end-of-year status), to provide that report cards must include the student's performance or nonperformance at his or her grade level.
- Amends section 1008.25, Florida Statutes (Public school student progression; remedial instruction; reporting requirements), to provide that the parent of any student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading must be notified in writing of specific information including strategies for parents to use in helping their child succeed in reading proficiency.
- Amends section 1012.72, Florida Statutes (Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program), to require teachers who receive certain bonuses under the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program to provide instruction to help other teachers work more effectively with the families of their students.
- Amends section 1012.98, Florida Statutes (School Community Professional Development Act), to require school districts to provide inservice activities for instructional personnel that include parent involvement.

2.0 What does the Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act require from the Florida Department of Education?

The Department of Education is required to:

- Develop guidelines for a parent guide to successful student achievement that describes what parents need to know about their child's educational progress and how they can help their child to succeed in school.
- Develop and disseminate a checklist for school districts to provide to parents to assist with parents' involvement in their child's educational progress.
- Establish a parent-response center to provide assistance to parents and families in answering questions and resolving issues related to their child's education.

3.0 When are districts required to complete these tasks?

The act shall take effect July 1, 2003. Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, each school district shall submit a copy of the rules, the parent guide and the parent checklist by October 1 to the Florida Department of Education. The district will also need to annually provide evidence of the effectiveness of its parent involvement program.

4.0 How does the Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act coordinate with the Family Involvement requirements of No Child Left Behind?

The required school board rules should be written to coordinate closely with the requirements of Section 1118 of NCLB, which requires each school district that receives Title I, Part A funds to implement programs, activities and procedures for the involvement of parents. According to NCLB, school districts must meaningfully consult with parents of children participating in Title I programs in planning and implementing such programs, activities and procedures. Each school district must develop jointly with, mutually agree to, and distribute to, parents of participating children, a written parent involvement policy that must be incorporated into the district's plan. Specifically, the plan must describe how the district will involve parents in the joint development of the district's NCLB plan and the process of school review and involvement. NCLB also requires the policy to include other provisions such as how the district will provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance. Each district Title I parent involvement policy should be a good place to start in meeting the requirements of the new state law for parent involvement programs in all of Florida's schools.

1. PARENT GUIDE

1.0 What is the purpose of the parent guide?

The purpose of the parent guide is to give parents information about the educational process as well as to share with them ways to be meaningfully involved in their children's education. Much of the information that educators take for granted is foreign to those who do not work in the education system. Often, parents are not aware that their child is not working on grade level or of resources that can help them. In addition, parents sometimes are not aware of the impact of educational decisions on a student's future. Information exists for parents in many different places, including on the web. However, there continues to be a disconnect between information and the families that need it the most. Placing needed information and contacts into one resource guide will help parents access services, make decisions about their child's educational progress, and assist their child in navigating the educational process.

2.0 What are the requirements for the parent guide?

The law requires that the parent guide:

- Be written in parent friendly language that is free of educational acronyms. The guide should be understandable to parents, including translation into other languages when appropriate.
- Be distributed to parents, students, and school personnel at the beginning of the school year. The guide may be included as part of the student code of conduct.
- Be discussed at the beginning of each school year in meetings with parents, students, and teachers.
- Include information concerning services, opportunities, choices, academic standards, and student assessment.

3.0 What is included in the FLDOE guidelines for the parent guide?

The FLDOE guidelines for the parent guide are included in Appendix A. The law is very specific about what types of information should be included in the parent guide. The guidelines say that information must be included in the areas of *general information, services for parents, parent participation, rigorous academic opportunities, educational choices, accommodations for students with disabilities, and local district information*. The guidelines offer specific examples of information that could be included in each of these areas. Because of the wealth of information, districts may not be able to provide extensive information on each subject. In that case, the guide should direct parents to sources for additional information. This information can be web-based, but because many of the parents that need this information do not have access to the web, there should also be alternate methods to gaining access to information such as a contact phone number.

4.0 Can other information be included?

Yes, any information that a district feels will be helpful to families should be included. There are also many requirements for parent notification that are not specifically listed in the Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act. These can be included as the district chooses. A listing of many of the parent responsibilities and rights pursuant to Florida Law are included in the guidelines.

3. SCHOOL BOARD RULES

1.0 What is the purpose of the new school board rules?

The school board rules should strengthen family involvement and family empowerment in the school district. *The rules must address:*

- Parental choices and responsibilities.
- Links with community services.
- Opportunities for parental involvement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of family involvement programs.
- Opportunities for parents to participate on school advisory councils, in school volunteer programs, and other activities.

2.0 Who should be involved in creating the rules?

The rules development process must include input from teachers, administrators, families, and key community-based organizations and businesses. In addition, the rules should be coordinated with federal entitlement programs, community involvement programs, communications offices, parent groups, students, and school improvement initiatives. Any other personnel deemed appropriate by the district may also be included.

3.0 Are there guidelines for the school board rules?

While there are no guidelines required in statute for the school board rules, the following considerations may be helpful:

- That the district will coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies with school improvement, Title I, Title II, Title IV, Title VI, Community Involvement Programs, Communications Offices, Business, Faith Based and other Partners.
- That the district will provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist schools in planning and implementing effective and comprehensive parent involvement programs, based on the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, which include:
 - Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.
 - Responsible parenting is promoted and supported.
 - Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
 - Parents are welcome in school and their support and assistance are sought.
 - Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
 - Community resources are utilized to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning.
- That the district will provide professional development opportunities for staff members to enhance understanding of effective parent involvement strategies through the district professional development plan.
- That the district will conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this policy:
 - To determine the effectiveness in increasing parent participation
 - To identify barriers to greater parent participation.
 - To report the findings to the State Board of Education.
- That the district will use the findings of the evaluations in designing strategies for school improvement and revising, if necessary, the parent involvement policies.

4. FLORIDA PARENT SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

1.0 What is the purpose of the parent checklist?

The purpose of the parent checklist is to provide parents with information on the types of parental behaviors that tend to promote student achievement, so that parents can assess their own parental involvement. The checklist should be delivered in a parent friendly context and is not to be used to gather information from parents, other than receipt of the information. A sample checklist, based on current research, is provided in Appendix B.

2.0 Can the sample checklist be modified?

Yes, districts are encouraged to be creative in delivering the information to parents. Different checklists may be developed for elementary and secondary. However, the information delivered should be based on current research about effective parent practices and according to law must address parental actions that:

- Strengthen the child's academic progress, especially in the area of reading.
- Strengthen the child's citizenship, especially social skills and respect for others.
- Strengthen the child's realization of high expectations and setting lifelong learning goals.
- Place a strong emphasis on communication between the school and the home.

3.0 How often should the checklist be sent home?

The checklist is required to be sent home at least once per school year. It can be given more often if schools or districts would like to do so.

1. CHANGES TO EXISTING STATUTE

1.0 What are the changes to Florida Statute section 1001.42, Powers and duties of district school board; section 1001.51, Duties and responsibilities of district school superintendent; and section 1001.54, Duties of school principals?

Section 1001.42 is revised to give district school boards the statutory authority to enforce the new requirements of the Family and School Partnership for Academic Achievement Act. Sections 1001.51 and 1001.54 require district superintendents and school principals to fully support and cooperate in this implementation.

2.0 What are the changes to Florida Statute section 1002.20, K-12 student and parent rights?

The introductory paragraph to this section is amended to add the statement that parents of public school students must receive accurate and timely information regarding their child's academic progress and must be informed of ways that they can help their child succeed in school.

3.0 What are the changes to Florida Statute section 1003.33, Report cards; end-of-year status?

Districts are required to include the student's performance or nonperformance at his or her grade level on the report card. Many parents have reported that they were unaware that their student was struggling in school because the student was making good grades on the report card. After FCAT and other testing, these parents sometimes learned that their child was not working at grade level.

4.0 What are the changes to Florida Statute section 1008.25, Public school student progression; remedial instruction; reporting requirements?

In 2002-2003 statute section 1008.25 (5) c was amended to require that the parent of any student in grades one, two, or three who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading must be notified in writing:

- That the child has a reading deficiency.
- A description of the current services being offered.
- A description of the proposed supplemental instructional supports and services.
- That the child must be retained if the reading deficiency is not remediated by the end of third grade or is exempt for good cause.

The Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act adds a requirement that this notification also include strategies for parents to use in helping their child succeed in gaining reading proficiency.

5.0 What is the format for the reading strategies?

Each district can design its own format for including reading strategies for parents. The strategies can be included in the context of the letter or as additional materials. There are many resources for reading tips for parents. The [Just Read, Florida!](#) website has many excellent links. Schools may also want to offer workshops, such as [Families Building Better Readers](#), to parents of struggling readers.

6.0 What are the changes to Florida Statute section 1012.72, Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program?

The [Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program](#) is a teacher recognition model where teachers receive bonuses to mentor other teachers. Instruction in working effectively with parents was added as a required related service.

7.0 What are the changes to Florida Statute section 1012.98, School Community Professional Development Act?

The School Community Professional Act governs each school district's in-service activities. Parent involvement was added as one of the primary focus areas for instructional personnel.

8.0 How will the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program and School Community Professional Development Act changes be implemented?

District staff charged with implementing these programs will receive technical assistance from the Florida Department of Education through the [Bureau of Educator Recruitment and Professional Development](#). Documentation of these changes and any benefits to parent involvement should be part of the district report to the State Board of Education.

6. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1.0 What are districts required to report?

The State Board of Education must annually review each district's compliance with this act and the district's success in achieving improved services for families. Beginning October 1, 2003 each district will need to submit a copy of the school board rules, a copy of the parent guide, and a copy of the parent involvement checklist with assurances concerning distribution and compliance in other areas of the act. Districts will also need to annually provide evidence of improved services to families.

2.0 What is the initial reporting format?

For the initial October 2003 report, districts will need to send copies of their school board rules, the parent guide, and the parent checklist. The FLDOE will develop a rubric for assessing the parent guide, based on the guidelines in Appendix A. The department will also develop assurances for districts to complete concerning distribution of the parent materials and compliance with all of the areas outlined in Section 5 of this TAP.

6.3 Can districts use materials or policies that are already in place to meet the requirements?

Yes. Building comprehensive parent involvement should be viewed as a process, with evaluation and improvement each year.

1.0 What will be the reporting format for subsequent reports?

Subsequent reports will need to include evidence of improved parent services. Specifics regarding the obligation to include evidence of improved services will be provided at a later date. In preparing for this report, districts should identify areas of impact and measurable goals now.

7. RESOURCES

1.0 What are some currently available resources for developing effective family and community partnership programs?

[FLDOE Office of Family and Community Outreach](#) contains resources for the implementation of the Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act, including technical assistance papers, sample school board rules, and sample parent guides. Please credit sources for parent guides when using the work of other districts.

[National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education](#) is a coalition of major education, community, public service, and advocacy organizations working to create meaningful family-school partnerships in every school in America.

[Center on School Family and Community Partnerships](#) houses the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Based on the research of Dr. Joyce Epstein, researchers, educators, parents, students, community members, and others are working together to enable all elementary, middle, and high schools develop and maintain effective programs of partnership.

[National Parent Information Network](#) (NPIN) is a project of the ERIC system, which is administered by the [National Library of Education](#) in the [U.S. Department of Education](#).

[National PTA](#) is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the United States. A not-for-profit association of parents, educators, students, and other citizens active in their schools and communities, the PTA encourages parental and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

7.1 Will other resources be provided?

Yes, the FLDOE will continue to develop written and training resources. In addition, as districts develop and share their products, the web-based resources will grow. Developing effective family involvement is a process, and the FLDOE will continue to provide support as districts work with families.

APPENDIX A

Guidelines and Sample Framework for Parent Guide

Guidelines

The purpose of the parent guide is to give parents information that they need to make decisions about their child's educational progress and to assist their child in navigating the educational process. The guide should be attractive and easy to navigate. For this reason, it is recommended that parent guides for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools be developed with information that is pertinent to each age. The parent guide also provides an opportunity to provide parents with other relevant information, including their rights and responsibilities under law and the many opportunities that are available to them and their children. Parents often express that they are unaware of state and local resources. The following framework provides districts with a listing of the information that parents may find helpful. Because it is such an extensive list, districts may not be able to provide in-depth information on each subject. In that case, the guide should help a parent know where to go for further information. Some of this additional information can be web-based. However, many of the parents that need this information do not have access to the web, so alternate methods to gaining access, such as a contact phone number, should be included.

The law requires that the parent guide:

- Be written in parent friendly language that is free of educational acronyms or jargon. The guide should be understandable to parents, including translation when appropriate.
- Be distributed to parents, students, and school personnel at the beginning of the school year. The guide may be included as part of the student code of conduct.
- Be discussed at the beginning of each school year in meetings with parents, students, and teachers.
- Include information concerning services, opportunities, choices, academic standards, and student assessment.

SAMPLE FRAMEWORK

The Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act requires that the following be included:

1. **District and general information:**
 - Contact information and district calendars.
 - Promotion requirements as outlined in the pupil progression plan.
 - State and district expectations for academic proficiency.
 - What parents can expect to receive in assessment results, including FCAT, report cards, progress reports, and other forms of assessment. There should also be an explanation of what those assessments mean and the role they play in accountability.
 - Qualifications of teachers in the district, as well as how the parent can find out about the qualifications of their child's teacher(s).
2. **Information on services that may be available to the parent, including:**
 - Family literacy services
 - Mentoring
 - Tutorial services – [FCAT Explorer Website](#)
 - After school programs
 - Student counseling services
 - Academic advisement
 - College planning services - [FACTS website for college preparation](#)

3. **Parental participation opportunities, including:**
 - Serving on school and district advisory councils
 - How to access school and district volunteer programs
 - Parenting classes that may be available
 - Adult education classes

4. **Rigorous academic opportunities for students, such as:**
 - Honors programs
 - Dual-enrollment opportunities
 - Advanced placement courses
 - International Baccalaureate programs
 - [Florida Virtual High School Courses](#)
 - Accelerated access to post-secondary education

1. **[Educational choices](#), including:**
 - Public school choice options such as controlled open enrollment, lab schools charter schools, magnet, alternative schools, dual enrollment
 - Private school choices such as Opportunity Scholarship Program, McKay Scholarships, corporate income tax credit scholarship program
 - Home education

6. **Classroom and test accommodations for students with disabilities.**
 - **Classroom accommodations**
 - Teaching methods or materials
 - Assignments or tests
 - Learning environments
 - Time demands and schedules
 - Assistive technology

 - **FCAT accommodations**
 - Presentation
 - Responding
 - Schedule
 - Setting
 - Assistive technology

SUPPLEMENTAL PARENT GUIDE INFORMATION

1. Parents are responsible for (pursuant to Florida law):

- Being sure their children are prepared to be successful in school.
- Complying with compulsory school attendance laws.
- Students' compliance with code of student conduct.
- Compliance with schools' reasonable and time-acceptable parental involvement requests.
- Compliance with school health-related requirements with certain exemptions.
- Ensuring that their children complete academic assignments on time and in the manner prescribed.
- Ensuring that their children are prepared for academic tests and other assessments.

2. Parents have a right to (pursuant to Florida law):

- Receive clear information on what is required for their children to be promoted to the next grade.
- Be notified of their children's progress toward achieving state and district expectations for academic proficiency.
- Be notified of their right to participate in the development of academic improvement plans.
- Receive assessment results, including student progress reports, report cards, and end-of-year status.
- Be notified of their eligibility to participate in school advisory council.
- Be notified of school accountability and school improvement rating reports, including school grading system; district performance grades.
- Be notified of accommodations for assessment.
- Receive information regarding teacher qualifications.
- Receive communication re: instructional materials.
- Be notified regard rights related to student records (access, waiver of access, challenge and hearing, and privacy).
- Receive notice and due process for parents of students with disabilities and parents of students in residential care facilities.
- Receive written notification of entire guidelines on *Religious Expression in Public Schools* published by USDOE.
- Receive copy of the District Code of Student Conduct.
- Be notified of student's suspension and reason for suspension.
- Receive written notice of recommendation of expulsion and due process.
- Be notified regarding zero tolerance and protection for victims of certain felony offenses.
- Review child's placement in alternative programs.
- Receive information regarding school-to-work transition.
- Be notified regarding administration of medication and provision of medical services by district school board personnel.
- Be notified regarding any verified report of a substance abuse violation by student.
- Receive notification of zero tolerance for harassment.
- Receive notification of zero tolerance for drug possession and use.

3. General information

- Attendance policies.
- Building environmental safety.
- Bus and transportation.
- Career and technical education.
- Child care.
- Community use of schools.
- Contact information for each school.
- Counseling and discipline.
- Daily school beginning and ending times.
- English for Speakers of Other Languages Program.
- High school graduation requirements.
- Homework assignment policies.

- Immunization requirements.
- Report cards and progress reports.
- School calendar.
- School district website.
- School entry requirements.
- School grading system.
- School zoning information.
- Student grading scale.
- Special education program.
- Test results.

4. Services

- Family literacy services.
- Mentoring.
- Student counseling.
- Academic advisement.
- Tutoring.
- Alternative education programs.
- After school programs.
- Referral to other agencies for family services.
- Academic interventions.
- Early childhood programs.
- GED/ABE classes for parents.
- Adult enrichment programs.
- Mental health services.
- Exceptional student education.
- 504.
- Student support services (guidance counselor, school psychologist, school nurse, school social worker).
- Financial assistance information for postsecondary education.
- College planning.
- Violence prevention/conflict resolution.
- Homework hotline.
- Truancy prevention and intervention.
- Access to state statutes and rules on line.

APPENDIX B

Florida Parent Self-Assessment Checklist

A Florida Parent Self-Assessment, to help parents determine how involved they are in promoting a positive education for their child, will be developed by each school district in accordance with DOE guidelines. The Parent Self-Assessment must be issued annually to all parents of students in grades K-12. Assessments should be grade appropriate and should include, but not be limited to:

- **Focus on Attitude**

- Parent stresses the importance of education and doing one's best in school.
- Parent expresses belief in the child's ability to be successful.
- Parent helps the child to set short and long term educational goals.
- Parent celebrates child's academic accomplishments.

- **Focus on Academics**

- Parent supports reading with age appropriate home activities.
- Parent assures that home has a consistent time and place to do homework.
- Parent ensures that child has access to materials needed to complete assignments.
- Parent regularly discusses and asks to see work that the child is doing in school.
- Parent attends workshops on helping their children at home.

- **Focus on Behavior**

- Parent monitors television viewing of child.
- Parent teaches and reinforces positive behaviors such as respect for self and others, hard work and responsibility.
- Parent is aware of and enforces school behavioral expectations.

- **Focus on Building Responsibility**

- Parent ensures that child has a regular routine.
- Parent encourages child to accept responsibility for his/her actions.
- Parent ensures that child is in attendance and on time to school each day.
- Parent monitors and promotes child's participation in extracurricular and after-school activities.

- **Focus on School/Home Connections**

- Parent communicates regularly with teacher in person, on the phone, by email or through writing.
- Parent prepares for and attends teacher conferences, Individualized Educational Plans, Academic Improvement Plans, or other individualized student meetings.
- Parent attends open house, science fairs, plays, musical events, class trips, sporting events, curriculum nights, or other school activities.
- Parent volunteers in the school setting when possible.