

Title I  
Pinellas County School District  
Parent Empowerment Toolkit



Expectations\* Exposure\* Engagement\*

## Welcome to the Title I Parent Empowerment Toolkit

Why would you want to use this guide and why was it created? The purpose is simple. To give you, our Title I parents, useful information that will allow you to create expectations for your child and their school community, to expose you to practical and simple ideas, and to help you get engaged in your child's education.

We want you to feel comfortable and confident in your child's school setting. You are so important to their academic and overall success in life.

You have the power to make a difference!

This toolkit is easy to use and is packed full of tips. You are in control. Pick what is going to benefit you and your child and simply use it. If it is not going to work for you, then don't force it. However, give it a try and if you need to tweak it to fit you, then do it. The overall goal is for your child to walk across that stage and receive a high school diploma, with you cheering in the audience.

So, let's set some expectations, expose our kids to greatness and get engaged!

Thank you for taking the time to invest in our country's greatest resource, your child.

Amy Brown

Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator

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# What Is Title I?

Title I is a federally funded program designed to address the academic needs of students and to assist them in meeting the state's high standards, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, science and mathematics. The Pinellas County School District receives funds based upon the number of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

## **What Is a Title I School?**

Title I schools are determined by the percentage of students at each school who are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

You may see this in your Title I School:

- Intervention classes - provide intensive assistance in reading and math
- Additional resource teachers and assistants who are highly qualified
- Additional training for school staff
- A variety of teaching methods and materials
- Special learning events
- Training for families
- After-school tutoring

## **How can parents benefit from Title I?**

We support you!

Title I schools offer training to support parents in the education of their child. Areas of training may include:

- Academic enrichment in reading, writing, math and science
- Learning styles
- Setting expectations and goals
- Technology

## **What Is Required of the School?**

Title I schools will provide parents of participating children with:

- Timely information about Title I programs
- A description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school
- Forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet
- If requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and to respond to any such suggestions as soon as possible.

## What is Parent's-Right-to-Know?

Federal law requires that the Pinellas County School District notify parents of all children in Title I schools of their rights to receive timely information on the professional qualification of your child's teacher.

Parents may request information about the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teacher including:

- Whether the teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualification or licensing criteria has been waived.
- The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certificate or degree held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.
- View the Principal Attestations

I'm sure if you were given a test on Title I you would pass with an A. So, it is time to move on to making sure you equip your children with what they need to be successful.

### Important Phone Numbers

Pinellas County School District	727-588-6000
Title I Office	727-588-6000
Transportation	727-587-2020
Student Assignment	727-588-6210
ESE/ Exceptional Student Education	727-588-6032
Gifted Program	727-588-6037

## It's the First Day of School!

Congratulations, you and your child survived the summer. Now it is time for a new year. These are a few suggestions that can jumpstart the new school year. Trust me; I know some of us did not have a great experience in school. However, you are in a different role now and your child needs you. We want them to have an even better experience. Here are a few things to remember and prepare for the first day of school.

- **The week before school starts, start your child with a night routine.** It is important that he/she is getting off his/her summer schedule and is well-rested.
- **Have a conversation about your expectations for him/her for the year.** What do they want to learn? What are they looking forward to in the next grade level? What can you do to help them make honor roll? Let them know that his/her success is important to you.
- **If you cannot take your child to school. Write a short letter or email to the teacher.** Give your child a note or index card with your contact information on it (*name, address, phone numbers, email, the best time to call*).
- **When your child comes home with those piles of paper. Sit down together and complete them.** Discuss the class and expectations, the school's compact, The Pinellas County Student Code of Conduct, Free and Reduce Lunch Application, clinic card, and any other forms.
- **Have an after-school routine set for your child.** This should include a time for them to talk to you, a snack, homework, and 30 minutes of reading. Once they understand and practice the routine, it will usually become automatic for them. Children need expectations and routines to help them feel safe, to encourage independence, as well as academic success.



A strong start is important!

## Words to Know

Throughout the school year, you will hear many words and acronyms being used at meetings, in letters, and in conversations. It is difficult to be a part of the conversation when you are not familiar with the words being used. You just may hear a sentence like this, “Thank you parents for attending our SAC, so we can discuss the SIP and PFEP. We will also need someone to serve on PAC.” It can be confusing but remember you can always ask questions. Here are a few definitions to get you started.

- **SIP** – School Improvement Plan, the strategies that a school will use to raise student achievement
- **PFEP** – Parent and Family Engagement Plan, the strategies and activities that will support parents being involved in their child’s education
- **SAC**- School Advisory Council, a team of school staff, parents and community leaders that make decisions about the school, Title I funds, etc.
- **PAC**- Parent Advisory Council, a district team of parents from Title I schools, Title I Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator, and other district staff that review, discuss and update the Pinellas County Parent and Family Engagement Plan and the Title I Annual Parent Survey
- **LEA** – Local Education Agency, Pinellas County School District



## “What Do I Say at the Conference?”

It is time for you to have a parent conference with your child’s teacher. The parent teacher conference is an important tool that can give you a very clear picture of your child’s progress and about the curriculum. Simply, what is it the teacher is teaching? What textbooks or technology is being used to teach your child? You have your child’s teacher (or possibly more than one teacher) attention for about 10 to 15 minutes. A conference can be requested by you or by the teacher. I would suggest that you schedule a conference at least once a semester or more if you have any concerns. Take these questions with you and something to write with.

- Write down the names of the teachers that are at the conference. Just in case you need to contact them later and for your documentation.
- Some questions to ask the teacher
  1. What lessons or skills will my child learn this year and what are you currently teaching?
  2. What grade does my child have at this point in your class? When do you update your grades on Focus?
  3. What are my child’s strengths?
  4. Are there any areas that he/ she needs more support?
  5. What can we do at home to make sure he/she is successful?
  6. What are his/ her quiz and test grades?
  7. Can you send me a note in the agenda or an email if there is a concern or improvement?
  8. Is after school tutoring available?
  9. What can I do to help you?
  10. What state tests will my child take this year and when will I receive the scores?
  11. Share information that you think they need to know about your child.



*You are needed at the table...you have the power!*

## What is happening at Home?

Your child has been in school all day. Now it is time to go home and complete homework. Is there a specific place to study? Can they watch television and complete the assignments? There are some things that you can do to help your child complete his/her best work.

1. First, create a specific homework time. Will it be as soon as he/she comes home? Will homework time start at 4:00 p.m.? Make sure the time is not too late.
2. Create a specific homework place, so that your child knows it is not time to play. Is it at the dinner table, or a chair and table in their room? Take a look at the space in your home and designate a homework station.
3. Have school supplies at the homework station and buy an inexpensive pencil sharpener.
4. Make sure that you or someone older is available to check the homework or to answer questions. Ask older kids to teach you something that they learned in class.
5. Use praise statements when your child does something great or meets your expectations. We all want to know we are doing a great job; kids need encouragement.
6. Show off the work! Put graded papers on the refrigerator, on the wall of the bedroom, or even in your room. Let him/ her know that education is important to you and you are proud of them. Hype it up! Give your child a shout out on Facebook or other social media.
7. Talk about their future and have something in the home to remind them. You may want to have a college mascot picture or display your achievements. Create a home that is positive and focused on education. Also, post pictures of what they want to become... picture of a scientist, an engineer, a television producer, a psychologist.

Remember that you have the power. You can create a home that helps your child get that diploma and gets you closer to planning a graduation party!



## Take a Moment and Regroup

Life can be unpredictable and sometimes the plans we make don't happen. It does not mean that we get to sit down and quit. Your child and your community are depending on you. There may be a time when your child studied but didn't get the grade, he /she wanted. There may be times when they have disagreements with their friends or teacher. He/She may get a detention for not meeting the expectations of the school. Here are a few things that you can try to get them and yourself back on track.

- **First, take a deep breath** and tighten your muscles and then release. Why? You want to make sure that you are not going into the situation angry and unfocused. You set the tone. Take a moment to think before you respond...take deep breaths.
- **Listen to your child.** Allow him/her an opportunity to vent frustrations or his/her side of the story.
- **Come up with a practical solution.** If your child was tardy, ask him/her to write down how he/she can get to class on time. Remind them about how important it is not to miss information in class and that you expect them to get to class on time. Ask them how many times is he/she going to his/her locker? Is he/she spending too much time talking to friends in the hall? Take the time to talk and listen.
- **Review your expectations.** Let him/her know that there are consequences for all decisions, whether it is good or bad. Take this time to refocus them on the big picture.
- **If you need more information about an incident contact the teacher.** If it is not resolved, then follow the chain of command. Contact the assistant principal and then the principal. Usually, the solution can be found before you get to the principal. Make sure you keep a list of the dates you contacted the school and the person's name that you discussed the matter with.
- **Talk to your child about being responsible, respectful, and responsive.** He/ She is responsible for his/ her actions in school, completing assignments, asking for help and showing 100% effort. Remind him/her that you expect him/ her to use manners and that he/she represents you and the family. This may be a good time to remind them of the **Compact** that the two of you signed. Remind your older child about graduation expectations and that they will be asking for letters of recommendation.

**Remember that your school community is interested in your child's success. So, go into the situation with a positive attitude, know what you want to accomplish, and be proactive, not reactive. Then it is time to hit the reset button, and do something relaxing and fun!**

## “Hey, I’m Bored!”

How many times have you heard that long drawn-out cry, “I’m bored.”? I’m sure it is too many times to count. We cannot entertain our kids all the time. That is not realistic; however, with some planning and effort, you can expose your child to interesting experiences inside and outside your home. Try some of these, of course, you can switch them up to meet your family’s interests and culture, but at least it is a starting point.

- Become a tourist in your city. Visit your city’s downtown, explore art galleries, or check out the museums. Did you know that St. Petersburg is rated one of the nation’s top art destinations? Have you ever been to the Tarpon Springs SpongeDocks?
- There are beautiful beaches surrounding Pinellas County, take your pick and pack up for the day. Check out Gulfport Beach, Treasure Island, St. Pete Beach, and Clearwater Beach.
- Go on the internet and pick out a recipe for cookies or snacks. You can practice math skills and communication, pretend that you have a cooking show. Then go give some of the cookies away to relatives, which would be a wonderful surprise.
- Grab a book and find an interesting place to read...on the porch, on the lawn, or at a park. Let your child read to you and then you read the next page to him/her.
- Explore on Google Maps, take a journey to Egypt and look at the pyramids, or to Niagara Falls. Let your child pick a place to explore, type it in and take a look. It is fascinating!
- Visit your neighborhood pool or turn on the hose and spray him/her.
- Invite your child’s friend over and let them play together, you can even get in on the fun. When is the last time you played hide and seek, jump rope, or tag? Turn off the television and the electronic games and get them moving. You can exercise and play with the kids, two for one.
- Check out your local newspaper’s weekend section or look online, you will be surprised at how many activities are free.
- Let your child plan the day and give them a budget and other expectations. Example: The activity must be between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. it cannot cost over \$5.00 total and must be within 15 miles of our house. Let them do all of the work.
- Go visit the local college campus. Take a look inside the bookstore, eat at a campus spot, talk to him/her about which college he/she would like to attend. Go to city hall or contact the local fire station and ask if they would give your child a tour or just talk to him/her.
- Visit the local nature preserves. Boyd Hill Nature Park or Sawgrass Lake Trail Hike are great places to visit.

- Turn on some music and have a dance contest. What about an old school Soul Train Line?
- Watch a movie together and pop popcorn.
- Go to the skating rink and take a few spins around the rink. There are three skating rinks in our area, in Pinellas Park, Tarpon Springs and Largo. Sometimes they have family specials.
- Go to your neighborhood recreation center and see what is happening. You may be surprised to know the classes and activities that are offered. Play or watch your child shoot hoops or spike a volleyball.
- Go support a team at your child's school. The student athletes would love to hear you and your family screaming and cheering in the stands. Get involved and show some school spirit.
- Host a family dinner, call up your aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings and invite them over for lunch, dinner, or breakfast. Ask everyone to bring a dish to share. Just watch what will happen...food plus family usually equals fun.
- Play a card game
- Find a book that everyone is interested in reading and everyone takes a turn reading pages or paragraphs out loud to each other
- Take out the camera or use your camera phone and find things to take pictures of, such as things in nature, buildings, and each other...pose for the camera!
- Go for a bike ride... and make sure to put on your helmets. The Pinellas County Trail is a great place to ride a bike or skate.
- Contact a nonprofit in the area and volunteer for a couple of hours.
- Ask your child for ideas and go for it!



## Let's Do This!

Ok, so you have your Title I Parent Empowerment Toolkit. This is a reference that you can use throughout the school year. First, let me thank you for taking the time to read this material. Your child's success is important to you and all of us that are part of the Pinellas County School District.

When you are involved and engaged in your child's education, great things happen. Research proves that students are confident, happier, make better grades and have less behavioral issues when you are involved. Parents, you make the difference. You have the power to change the life of your child. Whether that child is a newborn or a senior in high school, your involvement is critical to their overall success, inside and outside the classroom.

Talk to your child daily and check in with him/her. Stay in touch with his/ her teachers and be involved in the school's community. Raising children can be stressful at times, and we understand that. However, we need your strength in helping us hold your child up so that he/ she can reach his/her goals. Set clear expectations for your child in all areas of life, expose him/her to unique opportunities and experiences, and be engaged in his/her education and life.

Remember, to use all of your resources and to ask for help when you need it. Also, take advantage of the parent involvement activities at your child's school and in the district, let your voice be heard on SAC (School Advisory Council). You are our greatest partner, and we need you.

*Let's do this...you have the power!*

Amy Brown  
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