

Archived Information

A Compact for Learning



An Action Handbook for
**Family-School-Community
Partnerships**



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“ What we want to do is to challenge every principal, every teacher, every parent to have a written compact to outline their expectations and their responsibilities for helping every child learn to high standards. ”

President Clinton
Speech at the Vice President's
Family Reunion Conference
Families and Learning
June 25, 1997



Foreword

All across America there are communities pulling together to strengthen education. Parents, teachers, and community and business leaders, in every part of our country, are creating compacts to build and strengthen partnerships for improved student learning.

A compact is (1) a commitment to sharing responsibility for student learning and (2) an action plan for a family-school-community partnership to help children in your school get a high-quality education. This user-friendly handbook is designed to walk your family-school compact team through the steps of building a compact. It provides information, strategies, examples, and checklists to help parents, educators, and community members develop effective, workable compacts that can improve your school and increase student achievement. The handbook includes activity sheets to assist your partners in the creation and use of a compact.

A Compact for Learning is part of a continuous improvement series that will highlight key issues of interest to teachers, parents, and principals who want to make their schools better and work towards standards of excellence. These materials are available on the U.S. Department of Education Web site with links to resources, examples, and other school improvement aids.

This handbook and the Web site are both works in progress. We welcome your comments and hope that you will share your experiences with family-school compacts. Please mail your ideas or a copy of your compact to:

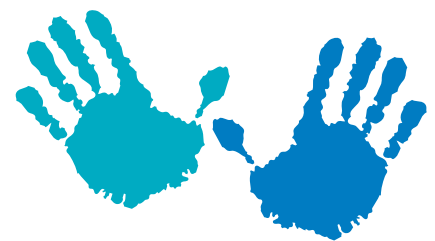
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Many of these compacts and tips will be put on the Partnership Web site, which is available through the U.S. Department of Education's home page at www.ed.gov/PFIE.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education



Introduction

“Better education is everybody’s business.”

—*The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education*

Today, we benefit from 30 years of research showing that families are important educators of their children. Until recently, however, many parents were told, “Hands off, you don’t know how to do it.” Not any more.

Truly, this is a new time in education, a time calling for the widest participation from school staff, family members, and students. All are asking, “What do we need to know? What are our responsibilities? What are the benefits of our actions? How can we work together?”

Family involvement in education makes a difference: in fact, it can make **the** difference in a student’s achievement at school and in life. Many schools now sponsor family involvement initiatives and activities to improve student learning and to support effective school performance through family-school-community partnerships.

Title I of the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 supports local efforts to help

children meet challenging standards and to get families involved.¹ Every school receiving Title I funds must develop a compact. The compact is a document that clarifies what families and schools can do to help children reach high standards. It serves as a clear reminder of everybody’s responsibility to take action at school and at home so that children can learn what is required of them. With the potential to create consensus and action, the compact defines the mutual responsibilities we all have for improving education now.

What is a compact?

A compact is a written commitment indicating how all members of a school community—parents, teachers, principals, students, and concerned community members—agree to share responsibility for student learning.

Writing a family-school compact provides an opportunity to create new partnerships in your school community. Principals and teachers, parents and other family members, students, and community members all have a role to play in helping students learn and achieve to standards of excellence. As you build your team, reach out, think big, and be creative. Use the development of a compact as a way to get parents and others who have not been closely connected to the school involved in the process. **Bringing together a team to talk about your school’s needs and the shared responsibilities of your school community can be as important as the task of developing a compact.**

¹Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, amended by the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, is designed to enable schools to provide opportunities for low-income and low-achieving children to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to meet the challenging standards developed for all children.

Signal Hill Elementary School Compact

Long Beach, California

The School

The staff and parents/guardians at Signal Hill Elementary School have high expectations of themselves and of the students at the school. In an effort to provide the highest quality instructional program to the students at Signal Hill Elementary School and to show how the school and family are working together to educate the children at Signal Hill Elementary, the staff and parents/guardians of Signal Hill Elementary School agree to implement the following programs and activities:

- Signal Hill Elementary School will provide an academic program that is rigorous and challenging and provide an accelerated math and science program.
- Signal Hill Elementary School staff will provide intersession and after-school enrichment programs for all students.
- Signal Hill Elementary School staff will communicate with families on an ongoing basis regarding the students' academic progress.
- Signal Hill Elementary School will implement a K-5 homework program that emphasizes meaningful practice of instructional content and writing in all content areas.
- Signal Hill Elementary School will involve parents/guardians in the governance of the school.

The Home

The school and families of Signal Hill Elementary recognize that while both parties agree that the expectations listed here are necessary in order to strengthen the communication and commitment between the home and the school, rare occasions may arise where one or both parties will have difficulty fulfilling all or part of this compact. It is also recognized that the school's purpose is to support the community and its families in whatever manner is necessary and reasonable within its ability to do so, and likewise, it is the family's responsibility to support the child and the school community.

- Parents/guardians at Signal Hill Elementary School will volunteer at least 10 hours a year at the school.
- Parents/guardians at Signal Hill Elementary School will send their children to school appropriately dressed, prepared to learn, and on time.
- Parents/guardians at Signal Hill Elementary School will read to their children at least 15 minutes a night.
- Parents/guardians at Signal Hill Elementary School will attend at least one parent/teacher conference a year to discuss the academic progress of their children.
- Parents/guardians at Signal Hill Elementary School will assist their children with their homework assignments on a regular basis to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Parent/guardian

Principal

Teacher

The family-school compact from Signal Hill Elementary School in Long Beach, California, focuses on improving students' academic achievement by setting high expectations for all students and for all of the school's partners. The compact is only one piece of a larger family-school partnership focused on shared responsibility. Notice how the commitments within the compact integrate the shared responsibilities of the compact into a cohesive plan of action. More examples of compacts may be found in Appendix A.

Five Step Compact Process



Purpose of the handbook

This action handbook explores the steps for compact implementation as illustrated in the diagram. The handbook is intended for the use of the compact team, whether it is a new group or an existing group, such as the site-based management council, a family-school advisory group, the local PTA, or any other group that works closely with the school.

Developing a partnership compact is good experience for any school. This handbook is intended to serve a variety of schools at all levels—elementary or secondary, Title I or not. If you already have a compact, the handbook can help you use, evaluate, and strengthen it. Just jump in at the appropriate step. At the end of each section is an

activity sheet. Putting ideas on paper will help to focus your thinking and planning. In the folder, you will find a set of black and white master copies of the activity sheets to use with the compact team.

As you develop and use your compact, remember that your best resources are the people around you—the teachers, school staff, parents, students, and community members who share your concern about the school and about student learning. Each person has something valuable to offer to the compact: it's up to you to discover the potential in your school community. Good luck, and remember that successful partnerships make successful schools!

“ It is not enough to have high expectations or set challenging standards. We must put standards of excellence into action in the classroom.

”

Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

