

Parents' Right to Know

What does NCLB say?

No Child Left Behind gives you, the parent, important new rights to receive information about your own children in Title I schools. All information should be in a simple format and in a language that you understand.

Student Achievement:

- You have a right to receive a report of how your child performed on the state's academic achievement test, with clear information about any needs which may have been identified for your child. You can then talk with your child's teachers about how to help them address those needs.
- The state and district must release report cards, which you can use to compare your child's achievement levels to those of other children in your school, district, and state.

Teacher Quality:

- At the beginning of each school year, you should receive a notice explaining that you have the right to ask for information about the qualifications of your child's teachers. (See "Teacher Quality" fact sheet)
- You have a right to know if teachers have emergency or temporary credentials.
- You have a right to know if teachers in your school are certified in the subject areas they are teaching.
- If your child is being taught by a teacher who is not fully qualified for four weeks or more, the school must send you a notice (even without you asking).

- You have a right to see the principal's declaration of compliance with the teacher quality provisions of NCLB.
- You have a right to see the district's plan for increasing teacher quality and how the district will make sure that qualified and experienced teachers are fairly distributed among all schools in the district.

Programs for English Language Learners:

- If your child is designated as an English-language learner, you have a right to know the level of your child's English proficiency, what programs are used to help teach your child English, and how those programs will meet your child's educational needs. You also have a right to know how long the program is expected to last and what it will take to exit out of the program. This must be written in a language you can understand.
- You also have a right to decline enrollment in the program, or to remove your child from the program, or to enroll in another program if available.

School Improvement:

- If your child's school has been identified as "in need of improvement," you should receive a notice explaining exactly why this happened and what the school is doing to improve. (See "Schools In Improvement" fact sheet)
- When schools are "in need of improvement," you should receive a notice say-

ing that your child might be eligible to transfer to another school or for free tutoring services. (See "School Choice" and "Supplemental Services" fact sheets)

Why is this important?

There's no question that parents can be an important voice in accelerating school improvement. It's useful to understand policies and get involved in the decision making process at the school and district levels and also to monitor legislation impacting education policy at the state level.

What can I do?

Work with your children. Ask them about school. Listen to what they say. Follow what they are learning. Get to know your child's teachers. Sit in and observe your child's classes if you can.

Check their homework. Compare homework assignments to state standards: are the two aligned?

Get the information you are entitled to. Look at school report cards and improvement plans. If you receive anything that you do not understand, go to the school and find out more. If you receive anything in a language you do not understand, contact the school and make sure you get what you need.

Get to know other parents and make sure everyone is being given the same information and is being treated the same way. Find out what school committees you can join and serve as a meaningful partner.