



NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



Now is the Time to Act!

Key Things Businesses, Community Groups, and Foundations Can Do to Make Sure America's Schoolchildren are Prepared for the 21st Century

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We live in a world where technological innovation and global competition are increasing at a pace never before seen. Now is the time to invest in our children to make sure they are prepared to succeed in the 21st century.

- U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

- **Encourage high school students to take more math, science and critical language courses.**
 - In the increasingly competitive global economy, it is crucial for American students to be well trained in math, science and critical languages (such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian).
 - U.S. students are currently performing below their international peers in math and science.
 - In 1983, the landmark education report, *A Nation at Risk*, recommended that high school students take a minimum of three years of math and three years of science. Yet today, only 22 States and the District of Columbia require at least this amount.
 - Currently, only 44% of American high school students are enrolled in a foreign language class. And less than 1% of American high school students study critical foreign languages.

Take Action:

- Find out about your State's math and science requirements for high school graduation.*
- Encourage students to take four years of math and four years of science, even if it is not required.*
- Find out what kind of critical language courses are offered. Encourage schools to offer these courses and encourage students to take them.*

- **Encourage high school students to take more Advanced Placement (AP) courses.**
 - Nearly 75% of high school graduates enter college, but only 12% of these students have completed a significant college-prep curriculum. Research shows that all students who take rigorous courses in high school stand a far greater chance of succeeding in college.
 - AP students are much more likely than their peers to graduate from college in four years or less. The four-year college graduation rate for students who take two or more AP courses is 32 percentage points higher than those who don't take any AP courses. And the rate for students who just take one AP course is 16 percentage points higher than those who don't take any.

Take Action:

- Find out what kind of AP courses your community's schools are offering. Make sure they are AP, not just "honors" courses. If they are not offering any, encourage them to do so. Offer to sponsor or promote AP programs in your local schools.*
- Find out what percent of students in your community's schools are taking AP courses. Encourage students to take these courses.*

- **Encourage teachers to take advantage of the Department of Education's Teacher- to-Teacher Initiative.**
 - Research has shown that students taught by effective teachers greatly outperform those taught by ineffective teachers.
 - *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) requires teachers of core academic subjects to be deemed "highly qualified" by their State. This means that they have a bachelor's degree, full State certification, and demonstrated competency in each core academic subject they teach.

- The Department's *Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative* supports teachers' professional development by engaging the nation's best teachers and principals to share strategies for raising student achievement.

Take Action:

- *Find out if all the teachers in your community's schools are "highly qualified." Find out if the math and science teachers have degrees in their field. This is one of the ways that they are able to demonstrate competency in their subject.*
- *If some are not, make sure the district and school have a plan in place to help them become highly qualified.*
- *Encourage teachers to take advantage of the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative. Through the Teacher-to-Teacher website, <http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative>, they can participate in free eLearning professional development courses, sign up for regular email updates on teacher-related issues, and learn about what the Department is doing to support teachers.*
- *Does your State allow the Department's free eLearning courses to count toward professional development credit and meeting the "highly qualified" requirements? Find out at: <http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative>.*
- *Encourage teachers to participate in the Department's free Teacher-to-Teacher professional development workshops. Find out more about these workshops at: <http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative>.*
- *Find out if your community's high schools have a program that allows well-qualified individuals outside the public education system to teach courses in high need areas. If they do, encourage your employees who have skills in math, science, or critical languages to teach a course at a local high school.*

➤ **Get involved in helping schools improve.**

- When a school is identified for improvement, meaning they have not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for at least two consecutive years, school officials are required to work with parents, school staff, the local educational agency, and outside experts to develop a plan to improve the school.
- If a school does not make AYP for five years, it moves into the "restructuring" phase and the district must initiate plans to restructure the school in the sixth year. Options include reopening the school as a charter school, replacing all of the school staff, or turning over school operations to the State or a private company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness.

Take Action:

- *Find out if there are schools in your community that are "in need of improvement." Make sure there is a plan in place to help these schools improve.*
- *Find out if any schools are in the "restructuring" phase. Make sure there is a plan for turning the school around.*
- *Find out if school districts in your community are receiving any competitive NCLB grants, such as: Early Reading First, Striving Readers, Teaching American History, Improving Literacy Through School Libraries, etc.*
- *Encourage school districts in your community to apply for all the NCLB grants for which they are eligible. A list of discretionary grants is available at: <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps>.*

➤ **Encourage parents to take advantage of the new opportunities NCLB provides for their children.**

- NCLB requires States and school districts to give parents easy-to-read, detailed report cards on schools and districts, telling them which ones are succeeding and why.
- NCLB gives students in schools in need of improvement the opportunity to transfer to another public school or public charter school in the district. If a school is in need of improvement for at least two years, low-income students are eligible to receive Supplemental Educational Services (SES), such as free tutoring.

Take Action:

- *Find out if parents in your community are receiving report cards on their children's schools. Make sure they are easy to understand.*
- *Find out what school districts and community groups are doing to inform parents of their options. See what you can do to help.*
- *Find out how many eligible children in your community are taking advantage of public school choice and free SES. Encourage parents to take advantage of these new opportunities.*