

Helping Families By Supporting and Expanding School Choice

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"Parents know what is best for their children. Expanding educational options for parents is one of the hallmarks of the No Child Left Behind Act and it remains one of the President's highest priorities."

-- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT INCREASES PARENTS' CHOICES

Empowering Parents With Information:

- Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), states and school districts must provide "report cards" for parents—that is, information tailored for parents telling them about the quality of education at their child's school. Written in an easy-to-read format, these report cards ensure that parents and taxpayers know which schools are achieving and how.
- Included in the report cards are student achievement data broken out by race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, as well as breakouts by whether the students are immigrants or have disabilities, and whether they are disadvantaged.
- States and school districts must also provide parents and children in struggling schools timely notification of the public school choice and supplemental services options that may be available for their children.

Expanding Public School Choice:

- Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, children in schools in need of improvement must be given the opportunity to transfer to other public schools in their district, including public charter schools, and school districts are required to tell parents about this option, as well as pay for transportation to the other schools. During the 2006-2007 school year almost 120,000 eligible students took advantage of this option.

Supplemental Educational Services:

- Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, children from low-income families who attend schools in need of improvement for two or more consecutive years are given the opportunity to receive free supplemental services—such as tutoring and other academic services provided outside the regular school day—from a variety of state-approved providers. Parents have the opportunity to choose the provider that best meets the needs of their children.
- Many types of organizations are eligible to be supplemental service providers, including faith-based organizations, for-profit companies, school districts, private schools, charter schools and other community groups. As of May 2008, 3,050 providers were approved by states to offer supplemental services.
- The President's FY 2009 Budget proposed a \$406 million increase for Title I (up 63% since 2001) to ensure that high-poverty schools have the extra resources they need to help all students reach proficiency. Districts must set aside an amount equal to 20 percent of their Title I allocation for supplemental services and transportation for public school choice.
- During the 2006-2007 school year almost 530,000 students took advantage of the supplemental services option.

Expanding Options for Parents and Children

The *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* significantly expands educational choice for parents and children. In many school districts, however, there are too few alternatives for parents seeking quality educational options. The President's 2009 budget reflects his commitment to expanding options for parents by including funding for programs such as:

Charter Schools

- The President's 2009 budget provides \$236 million to continue the Charter School Program, which increases public school choice options by supporting the planning, development, and initial implementation of public charter schools. In 2008, more than 1.2 million students are being educated in 4,300 public charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia.
- NCLB specifically includes public charter schools as an option for families deciding to transfer their children from a school identified for improvement.

Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program

- This program supports competitive grants to public and nonprofit entities to help charter schools finance their facilities through such means as providing loan guarantees, insuring debt and other activities to encourage private lending. The President's FY 2009 budget requested \$36.6 million for Credit Enhancement.

Magnet Schools

- Magnet schools provide distinctive educational programs that attract diverse student populations. The President has requested \$104.8 million for this program in his 2009 budget.
- In the 2007-2008 school year, 175 schools from 41 districts took advantage of this program, benefiting 128,000 students.

Voluntary Public School Choice Program

- The President's 2009 budget provides \$25.8 million for this program, which offers grants to states and school districts to establish or expand innovative public school choice programs. Viable public school choices for NCLB transfers include magnet, charter, virtual, alternative, specialized, and thematic school programs.

D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP)

- Authorized under the *DC School Choice Incentive Act*, the DC OSP is the first federally funded scholarship program in the U.S. Created in 2004, the program provides scholarships to cover tuition, fees and transportation expenses for students from low-income families in the District of Columbia to attend participating private schools of their choice. Students enrolled in the program can receive up to \$7,500 in financial assistance to pay for their education at a private school.
- For the 2007-08 school year, DC OSP provided over 1,900 students with scholarships to attend private schools.
- The President's 2009 budget requested \$18 million for the program.

Pell Grants For Kids

- The proposed Pell Grants for Kids program would offer \$300 million in scholarships to enable poor students in struggling schools to transfer to a new school of their choice. Modeled after the successful Federal Pell Grant program, Pell Grants for Kids would support state and local efforts to increase educational options for low-income K-12 students enrolled in the Nation's most troubled public schools. Under the Pell Grants for Kids program, the Education Department would make competitive awards to States, cities, local educational agencies, and nonprofit organizations to develop K-12 scholarship programs for eligible low-income students attending schools that have not made adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act for five years, or that have a graduation rate of less than 60 percent. Students could use scholarships to pay tuition, fees, and other education-related expenses at higher-performing out-of-district public schools or nearby private or faith-based schools.