

What Parents Need to Know



NoChild
LeftBehind



U.S. Department of Education



U.S. Department of Education

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The Importance of *No Child Left Behind*

As the parent of a school-aged child, you've no doubt heard about *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and would like to understand what it means—especially the benefits it offers you and your child.

On January 8, 2002, *NCLB* was signed into law. Americans united behind a revolutionary idea: every child can learn. The law confirms that as a nation, we will not accept a public school system that educates only a portion of its children.

NCLB recognizes what truly makes a difference in providing a quality education. It calls for a highly qualified teacher in the core subjects in every classroom; the use of proven, research-based instructional methods; and timely information and options for parents. Schools that underperform are held accountable, providing their students with free tutoring or transfer to a better-performing public school. In other words, children's education needs are placed first—where they belong.

To achieve its goals, *NCLB* works according to four common-sense principles:

- ① holding schools accountable for results;
- ② giving states and districts flexibility in how they spend federal money;
- ③ using scientific research to guide classroom practice; and
- ④ involving parents by giving them information and choices about their children's education.

In 1965, Congress passed the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, providing, for the first time, significant federal funding for K–12 education.

The original law has been renewed eight times, most recently by *NCLB*.

"No Child Left Behind is about a commitment to all children, and, of course, it's one that we absolutely must honor if we're going to continue to thrive as the great nation that we are."

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

Title I of *No Child Left Behind* is “Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged.” Why is this important to your understanding of *NCLB*? Because **schools with high concentrations of children from low-income families receive Title I money, which is most of the federal K–12 education funds** (\$12.7 billion for the school year 2006-07). They receive this money through their states and districts, and more than half of all public schools (55 percent) fall into this category, often called “**Title I schools.**”

For states to get any Title I money, they must ensure that *all* of their public schools and school districts meet certain requirements set forth in *NCLB*. For Title I schools, *NCLB* requires additional measures to ensure that America’s neediest students are no longer left behind. All of these requirements are designed to put into practice the four common sense principles above and provide benefits for your child that—taken together—will guarantee the excellent education he or she deserves and needs.

“There is wisdom in the words, ‘What gets measured gets done.’”
— Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings



Benefits of *NCLB* for You and Your Children

Accountability: *No Child Left Behind* requires strong accountability. For the first time, every public school is held accountable for the academic performance of every child—regardless of race or ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability or native language. The measure of accountability is Adequate Yearly Progress.

⑥ **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** is defined by the states. They set certain goals for student achievement and measure progress by how well all students perform on state-developed tests. To make AYP, schools—as well as the groups of students mentioned above—must meet the state-set levels of achievement on these tests.

⑥ **Testing to Measure Knowledge** gives states the information they need to determine whether their schools and districts are making AYP. In addition, you'll get a confidential report on your own child's test results that can help you, your child and your child's teachers see how well he or she is learning, and whether additional help is needed. *NCLB* requires schools to test your child in reading or language arts and math every year in grades 3–8, using state developed tests. Your child will also be tested at least once in high school. By 2007–08, students will take science tests at least once during the elementary, middle and high school years.

⑥ **Local Report Cards** are prepared every year by school districts that receive Title I funds. They include information on how students performed on state tests—not only in the districts as a whole but also in individual schools. Districts must make the report cards easy to understand and available to parents (see sample report card on page 6). If you are not in a Title I district, your school district may still prepare a local report card; many do. In any event, your state will prepare a report card on student achievement in the state.


Flexibility: *No Child Left Behind* gives states and school districts more control and more flexibility to use resources where they are needed most. Principals and administrators can move funds from one program to another to use money wisely and to meet student needs.


Funding: *No Child Left Behind* has meant more federal money for schools. The president proposed \$23.5 billion for *NCLB* funding in 2007, up from \$17.4 billion in 2001. And while states and local communities still provide most of the funding for K–12 education, the federal share rose from 5.7 percent in 1990–91 to 8.9 percent in 2006–07. The other main federal K–12 education



program is the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Its funding has also increased in recent years.

Help for Children at Underperforming Title I Schools: *No Child Left Behind* offers options to students in Title I schools that are “in need of improvement,” meaning they have not made AYP goals for two consecutive years or longer. Options depend on how long a school has not made AYP. These include public school choice and extra help with learning.

4  **Public School Choice** may let you transfer your child to another public school, which could be a public charter school, if your child attends a Title I school that has not made AYP for two years or longer. In addition, your school district may pay for the transportation of your child. Contact your child’s school district to find out if your child is eligible for this opportunity.

 **Extra Help With Learning—or Supplemental Educational Services—**could be free tutoring, homework help or other extra help outside the regular school day—before or after school, on weekends or in the summer. Your child may qualify if he or she is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and is enrolled in a Title I school that has not made AYP for three years or longer. Contact your child’s school district to find out if your child qualifies.

Help for Underperforming Title I Schools: *No Child Left Behind* lays out an action plan and timetable for steps to be taken by a district and school to help get an underperforming school on track. First, the district identifies the kind of help needed depending on how long the school has been underperforming. In providing help, the district could see that school administrators get technical assistance as they develop and carry out a school improvement plan. Or help could mean professional development for teachers—or, possibly, a new curriculum. The goal is to assist schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

High-Quality Teachers: *No Child Left Behind* provides funding to help teachers improve their instructional skills through training and other professional development. The law also requires states to develop plans to make sure that all teachers of core academic subjects are highly qualified. It defines a “highly qualified” teacher as one with a bachelor’s degree, full state certification, and demonstrated competence for each subject taught. Finally, if your child is in a Title I school, *NCLB* requires the district to let you know of your “right to know”—and how to get—information on the qualifications of your child’s teachers.



Parental Involvement: *No Child Left Behind* empowers you to ask important questions and make informed decisions about your child's education. The law also requires states, districts and schools to develop ways to get parents more involved in their child's education and in improving their child's school. For example, both Title I districts and schools must have written policies on parental involvement and provide this information to you.

Safe Schools: *No Child Left Behind* recognizes that children need to attend safe schools in order to succeed. Support for safe schools is a key part of the law. *NCLB* includes a variety of programs to help schools provide safe and healthy learning environments where violence, gangs and drugs are not present and school staff are prepared to respond to crisis situations. Although the rate of theft and violent crimes against students ages 12–18 has decreased in recent years, many parents and children remain concerned. If your child has been the victim of a violent crime at school or attends a school identified by your state as “persistently dangerous” under *NCLB*, he or she must be given the option of transferring to a safe school within the school district.

Sound Scientific Research as the Basis for Instructional Decisions: *No Child Left Behind* focuses on teaching methods that have been proven by research to work.

Strong Reading Instruction: *No Child Left Behind* provided more than \$1 billion in fiscal year 2007 to help children learn to read through the Reading First program, which is dedicated to ensuring that all children learn to read on grade level by the third grade. The program provides money to states and many school districts to support high-quality reading programs based on the



best scientific research. Contact your child’s school district to find out if its reading program is based on such research.

More on Local Report Cards

The law requires that you, as a parent, be informed of test results so that you can make good decisions about your child’s education. Test results are reported in different ways. First, you’ll receive a confidential report on how your own child performed on statewide tests. Second, you should see achievement data on your child’s school in your school district’s report card. Finally, your state will report statewide student achievement information. These report cards will give you important facts about how children from different groups are performing.



Sample of Local Report Card Form¹

Student Group	Reading/Language Arts						Mathematics					
	Percent Tested			Percent Proficient & Advanced			Percent Tested			Percent Proficient & Advanced		
	Goal: 100% ²			Goal: X% ³			Goal: 100% ²			Goal: X% ³		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
All Students												
African American												
American Indian/ Native American												
Asian/Pacific Islander												
Hispanic												
White												
Students with Disabilities ⁴												
Limited English Proficient												
Economically Disadvantaged												

Source: U.S. Department of Education. 2003. *Report Cards, Title I, Part A, Non-Regulatory Guidance*, www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/reportcardsguidance.doc.

¹ All data should be based on students enrolled for a full academic year.

² While the goal for percent of students tested is 100 percent, a state, district or school will meet AYP requirements for participation if 95 percent or greater of all students and all subgroups of students are assessed.

³ X = Goal determined by the state.

⁴ Includes results from all students with disabilities as defined under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, including results from alternate assessments. Does not include results from students covered under section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*.



Some Tips to Help Your Child Succeed in School

- ④ **Encourage your child to read:** It's the single most important thing you can do to help your child succeed in school. Read aloud to your baby right from the start. Babies love to hear your voice, look at pictures and touch the pages. As your child grows older, make reading together part of your daily routine.
- ④ **Talk with your child:** Take advantage of everyday opportunities to talk with your child when you are walking, riding in a car, eating dinner or shopping, for example. Children who aren't drawn into conversation or encouraged to talk often have problems learning to read, which can lead to other problems in school.
- ④ **Monitor homework:** Identify a special place for your child to study. Set a regular time and check in once in a while to see if your child needs help.
- ④ **Monitor TV viewing and video game playing:** Set limits on the amount of time your child spends watching TV and playing video games. Spend time watching TV with your child and talking about what you are watching together.
- ④ **Encourage your child to use the library:** Go to your local library together; obtain a library card for your child; introduce your child to the librarian; and check out books for both of you.
- ④ **Help your child learn to use the Internet safely and effectively:** Spend time online with your child. If you don't have a computer at home, check to see if your local library has computers that you and your child can use.
- ④ **Encourage your child to be responsible and to work independently:** Help your child choose activities that build his or her knowledge, responsibility and independence; monitor what your child does after school, in the evenings and on weekends.
- ④ **Encourage active listening:** Listen to your child's ideas and respond. This type of give-and-take at home is likely to help your child participate and be interested at school.



For More Information

To learn more about *No Child Left Behind* and how it affects your child and your school, contact:

- ④ Your local school district. Your school principal, other staff in your school or your district Title I director will be able to help you. The district phone number is usually listed in the blue pages of the local telephone directory; or
- ④ The U.S. Department of Education, toll-free at 1-800-USA-LEARN or online at www.ed.gov.

Finally, be sure to attend parent-teacher conferences, parent organization meetings and other events at your child's school where you can get a lot of information, ideas and help from teachers as well as from other parents.

White House photo by Shealah Craighead





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