



# NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



## Parents, Check It Out! Key Things Parents Can Do To Make Sure Their Children Are Prepared For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

April 2006

*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 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*- U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings*

- **Make sure your child understands the importance of math in elementary school, and encourage your child to take more math, science and critical language courses in high school.**
  - 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:**

- Encourage your elementary school child in his/her math homework. Remind him/her of the importance of learning math for success in high school, college, and beyond.*
- Learn your State's math and science requirements for high school graduation.*
- Encourage your child to take four years of math and four years of science in high school, even if it is not required.*
- Find out what kind of critical language courses your child's school offers. Encourage your child's school to offer them and encourage your child to take them.*

- **Encourage your child to take more Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school.**
  - Nearly 75% of high school graduates enter college, but only 12% of these students have completed a significant college-prep curriculum. Research shows that 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 for those who don't take any AP courses. And the rate for students who take just one AP course is 16 percentage points higher than for those who don't take any.

### **Take Action:**

- Find out what AP courses your child's high school offers. Make sure they meet the true definition of Advanced Placement and are not simply "honors" courses. If the school does not offer any, encourage it to do so.*
- Encourage your child to take AP courses.*

- **Encourage your child's teacher 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.

- The *No Child Left Behind Act* (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 educators’ professional development by engaging the nation’s best teachers and principals to share strategies for raising student achievement.

**Take Action:**

- Find out if your child’s teacher is “highly qualified.” Find out if your child’s middle school or high school math and science teachers have degrees in their field.
- If your child’s teacher is not “highly qualified,” make sure the district and school have a plan in place to help him/her become highly qualified.
- Encourage your child’s teacher 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>, your child’s teacher 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.
- Your State may allow the Department’s free “eLearning” courses to count toward a teacher’s professional development credit and toward meeting the “highly qualified” requirements. Find out at: <http://www.ed.gov/teacherinitiative>.
- Find out if your child’s school has a program that allows well-qualified individuals outside the public education system to teach courses in high-need areas as adjunct teachers. If they do, and if you have skills in math, science, or critical languages, consider teaching a course.

➤ **Get involved in helping your child’s school improve.**

- When a school is identified for improvement, meaning it has 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. The district must initiate plans to restructure the school in the sixth year. Options include reopening the school as a charter school, replacing the school staff, or turning over school operations to the State or a private education company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness.
- The Department of Education has numerous resources to help students and their schools improve academic performance, including Early Reading First and Reading First grants, Teaching American History grants, Improving Literacy Through School Libraries grants, and many others.

**Take Action:**

- Find out if your child’s school is “in need of improvement.” If it is, ask if there is a plan in place to help your child’s school improve.
- Find out if the school is in the “restructuring” phase. If so, ask if there is a plan for turning the school around.
- Find out if your child’s school district is receiving any competitive NCLB grants. Encourage your child’s school district to apply for all the NCLB grants for which it is eligible. A list of discretionary grants is available at: <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps>.

➤ **Take advantage of the new opportunities NCLB may provide for your child.**

- 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 then become eligible to receive Supplemental Educational Services (SES), such as free tutoring.

**Take Action:**

- Make sure you receive a report card on your child’s school and that it is easy to understand. If you don’t receive a school report card or if it is hard to decipher, contact your child’s school district.
- Do you know whether or not your child is eligible to transfer to another public school or receive free tutoring? If you are not sure, contact your school district. Take advantage of these opportunities for your child.