

Frequently Asked Questions

ON

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

AND

Public School Choice, Parental Options and Supplemental Education Services

No Child Left Behind is the education plan signed into law by President Bush in January of 2002. The law provides a number of important opportunities for parents to be involved with their child's school.

1. Public School Choice and Parental Options

When are children eligible for school choice? One of the big changes that *No Child Left Behind* provides for you, as a parent, is called PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE. This is *your right* to take your child out of a *low-performing school or an unsafe school* and to transfer him into a better or safer school

Children are eligible for school choice when the Title I school they attend has not made *adequate yearly progress*

- ❖ the formula that the RI Department of Education uses to determine how a school's test scores are progressing
- ❖ if a school's test scores are NOT high enough, then the school has failed to make adequate yearly progress

....in improving student achievement--- as defined by the state (RI Department of Education)-for two consecutive years or longer and is therefore identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring.

- ❖ any child attending such a school *must be offered* the option of transferring to a public school in the district--including a public charter school--not identified for school improvement, unless such an option is prohibited by state law.
- ❖ priority in providing school choice must be given to the lowest achieving children from low-income families.
- ❖ children attending any "persistently dangerous school," as defined by the individual state, are eligible for school choice
- ❖ children who have been the victim of a violent crime on the grounds of his or her school are also eligible for school choice.

How do parents know if their child is eligible for school choice?

Under *No Child Left Behind*, school districts are required to notify parents if their child is eligible for school choice because his or her school has been identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring.

- ❖ parents must be notified no later than the first day of the school year following the year for which their school has been identified for improvement
- ❖ parents can be notified by
 - letters sent to parents
 - newsletters
 - posters
 - websites
 - phone calls
 - all information must be in a language that parents can understand
- ❖ school choice is offered as an option to parents in the event their child is attending a school that is "persistently dangerous" or has been the victim of a violent crime while on school grounds.

What action can parents take if their school or district does not offer school choice to their child who is eligible?

Schools and districts receiving Title I funds must provide choice for eligible students as described above. If they do not, parents are encouraged to contact their state department of education.

How will parents know which school they can transfer their child into? When your child's school district notifies you that your child is eligible for school choice because his school is in need of improvement, they must tell you what schools are available to you to select for your child and tell you about the quality of those schools.

Do public school options include only schools in the same district?

There may be situations where children in Title I schools have school options outside their own district. For instance, a school district may choose to enter into a cooperative agreement with another district that would allow their students to transfer into the other district's schools. In fact, the law requires that a district try "to the extent practicable" to establish such an agreement in the event that all of its schools have been identified as needing improvement, corrective action or restructuring.

What information should a parent have about eligible schools to help them decide which school is best for their child?

Here are some questions you can ask the principal of the school that you are considering for your child

1. How will you help my child adjust to his new school?
2. How do you deal with students who are having trouble in school?
3. What services will you offer my child so that he can do better in school?
4. How well do your students do in reading, English, math and other subjects?

5. How has achievement in your school changed over the last few years?
6. What percentage of teachers are highly qualified?
7. How will your school help my child prepare for life after graduation?

Is transportation available for children who exercise their right to attend another school? Subject to a funding cap, established in the statute, districts must provide transportation for all students who exercise their school choice option under Title I. Priority must be given to the lowest-achieving children from low-income families.

2. Supplemental Education Services

What are supplemental educational services and when are children eligible for supplemental services? Supplemental educational services are additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students in schools that have not met State targets for increasing student achievement (adequate yearly progress) for three or more years. Supplemental services, or out-of-school-help, must be offered to parents beginning in the **second year after** a school has determined to be in need of improvement

- ❖ These services may include tutoring and after-school services.
- ❖ They must not take place during school hours
- ❖ They may be offered through public or private-sector providers that are approved by the state, such as public schools, public charter schools, local education agencies, educational service agencies and faith-based organizations.
- ❖ States must maintain a list of approved providers across the state organized by the school district or districts they serve, from which parents may select
- ❖ States must also promote maximum participation by supplemental educational services providers to ensure that parents have as many choices as possible.

Students who are not performing academically, are from low-income families and who choose remain in Title I schools that fail to meet state standards for at least three years are eligible to receive supplemental educational services.

Are parents notified about supplemental educational services?

Yes. Local education agencies are required to provide annual notice to parents of eligible children about the availability of services and information on the approved providers.

- ❖ parents can be notified by
 - letters sent to parents
 - newsletters
 - posters
 - websites
 - phone calls
- ❖ all information must be in a language that parents can understand

Can parents choose providers for tutoring and other supplemental educational services?

Yes, parents of eligible children are free to choose any provider on the state approved list and your school district will pay for these services to your child. Upon request, the local education agency will help parents determine which provider would best fit their child's needs. When parents have made their selection, the local education agency must then contract with that provider to deliver the services. Churches, non-profit organizations, private tutors, for-profit companies and others may be on the list.

What action can parents take if their child is eligible for tutoring or other supplemental educational services, but their school or district does not offer them?

Districts receiving Title I funds *must offer* free tutoring and other extra help to eligible students, as described above. If eligible students are not being offered these services, parents are encouraged to contact their state department of education.

How are providers of supplemental educational services held accountable?

States must develop and apply objective criteria for evaluating providers and monitoring the quality of services that they offer. In addition, supplemental services providers must give to parents, as well as to the school, information on their children's progress. Once a parent has chosen a provider, they should meet with the provider to set goals for their child, to discuss how to ensure that goals have been met and to set a timeline for accomplishing the work.

What about students with disabilities? Will the providers on the list know how to work with these students?

Students with disabilities must have the same access to extra services as students without disabilities. The state must be sure to include on the list of providers those who can adequately help students who need extra accommodations.

In Rhode Island, you can call the RI Department of Education to receive a list of supplemental service providers or you can log onto:
www.ridoe.net/child_family/supplemental/approved_list.htm

If you have questions regarding low-performing schools, school choice, parental options or supplemental services, you can call the RI Parent Information and Resource Center, a program of the RI Parent Information Network, at 401-727-4144.

RI Parent Information and Resource Center
RPIRC
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