

Parent Involvement

The No Child Left Behind Act won't meet its full potential for improving schools without parent and community groups organizing and pushing to make sure that policies are implemented according to the intent of the law. When parents combine facts with their passion to improve their child's education, they become a powerful force. No Child Left Behind provides data (hard facts) that parents can use to evaluate the academic progress of their children.

Each school district is required to develop an effective process for meaningful parental involvement. Each school district receiving Title I funds must have a written parent involvement policy and this policy must be developed in partnership with parents.

What is new?

No Child Left Behind has put some meat on the bones of parent involvement by mandating information that parents are entitled to. The school district parent involvement policy should specify how districts and schools will provide this information to all parents—in a language and format parents can understand.

Under NCLB; Parents have a right to:

- See information about teacher qualifications.
- Know if teachers have emergency or temporary credentials.
- Know if teachers are certified in the subject they are teaching.
- Know if your child is being taught by a teacher's aide, and if so, with what qualifications.

- Know if your child has been taught for more than four weeks in a row by a teacher who is not highly qualified.
- See the principal's declaration of compliance with the teacher quality provisions of NCLB.
- See the district's plan for increasing teacher quality and how the district will make sure that qualified teachers are equally distributed among all the schools in the district.

Schools have an obligation to encourage parental participation. They can:

- Use NCLB funds for parent training to understand standards, assessments, report cards, data and other information you are entitled to.
- Promote broad representation of parents on school improvement committees.
- Assure parents that communications will be in the language spoken in the home.
- Hold meetings with flexible hours to accommodate working parents' schedules.
- Use Title I funds to provide transportation and child care for parents, or home visits providing these services are related to parent involvement.
- Offer classes for parents who speak English as a second language or parents who would like to improve their own literacy skills.

Why is this important?

Most school systems and schools won't change the way they do business without outside help and pressure. No Child Left

Behind provides some leverage for parents and advocates.

Schools and school districts benefit when parents are informed advocates.

What can I do?

Join a parent group, get informed—become active!
You can:

- Visit high achieving schools in your district and/or state with populations similar to your school and see how they improved academic achievement.
- Get copies of the standards and sample copies of tests and learn how they are used in the classroom.
- Find out how tests and other assessments are used to evaluate and improve instructional practices.
- Monitor your child's homework to see if it's on grade level (See the Education Trust's brochure called "Does My Child's Homework Meet High Standards?" available on the internet at http://www.edtrust.org/main/main/homework_eng.asp.)
- Get to know your child's teachers.
- Go to meetings, talk with other parents.
- Learn about school issues.
- Study school report cards when they are released.
- Attend district school board meetings.

Talk to your child's teacher. You don't have to wait until "Back to School Night" or parent conferences. Your children will benefit if their teachers know that you are behind them every step of the way.