

# Schools In Improvement

### What does NCLB say?

When schools do not make AYP (see Fact Sheet on “Adequate Yearly Progress”) for two years in a row, they are identified as needing improvement. From a parent’s perspective this is a good thing. It means the school district and state have greater obligations to help this school and its students. In Fact, states get federal funds specifically to help schools in improvement.

Once a school is identified as needing improvement, it must send a written notice to all parents at the school about the need for improvement and about how parents can get involved in improvement efforts. The school must also begin immediately to develop a plan for improvement, and it must work with many partners in developing the plan, including parents. This plan must include:

- Specific data that shows exactly what areas need to be improved;
- Strategies that the school will use to raise achievement;
- Strategies for training and supporting teachers and principals;
- A description of how the district and state will help the school to improve; and
- Strategies to increase parental involvement.

In addition to notification and the opportunity to participate in school improvement efforts, parents must be informed of their right to transfer their children to a better performing school. If the school is in its second year or more of school improvement, students from low-income families must be offered supplemental services such as tutoring. These supplemental services are provided outside the school day by state-approved companies or organizations. Transfers and supplemental services are provided at no cost to parents. They are paid for entirely with federal funds.

### Why is this important?

Many parents have known for a long time that their schools needed improvement, but have not felt that their schools received the help or support they needed.

The school improvement process under NCLB is designed to compel school districts and states to make much needed improvements in the instructional program of underperforming schools. It is also designed to make sure that students who are behind get extra help. This is the only way these students will be able to catch up and to meet high standards.

### What can I do?

The most important thing to do is to be there when your school needs help. The school improvement plan is a wonderful opportunity to get involved. The law says that schools in need of improvement must take steps to include parents.

Some states or districts seem to almost panic when they find out that many or even a few schools will be given this “label.” This “label” is simply a way to identify problem areas and to set up plans to take care of those problems. No Child Left Behind does not label schools as “failing,” even though the media likes to use this term. If your car’s engine is not working properly, you need to find out what is wrong and to figure out a way to fix it. This law does the same for schools.

It is of course possible that some schools will not improve, even with an improvement plan. There are times when more drastic measures will have to be taken. No Child Left Behind says that if a school still has not made progress after six years, the principal and the main staff can be replaced, or the school can be completely reorganized. If this happens, parents can and should be part of the restructuring process of the school.