



Tip Sheet

No Child Left Behind

What Parents Need to Know About

Public School Choice

No Child Left Behind is the education plan that was signed into law by President Bush January 08, 2002. It is designed to improve student achievement, and decrease the achievement gap. The law includes a number of important opportunities for parents to be involved with the schools. These Tip Sheets from Parents Plus are designed to help parents understand their rights under the law.

One of the big changes that *No Child Left Behind* provides for you as a parent is called **Public School Choice**. This is the right to take your child out of a low-performing school identified for improvement, and transfer him into a public school not identified for improvement. The *No Child Left Behind* law applies to any public school that receives Title I funds from the federal government. Public schools can receive Title I funds if a certain percentage of its students are eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch. Ask your principal if your school receives Title I funds.

Here's how public school choice works for schools:

- The law says that a school is determined to be **identified for improvement** if it has failed to meet state standards for two years in a row.
 - In Wisconsin that is determined **primarily** by Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE).
 - There is a formula that the state uses to determine how the scores should be progressing. This is called "adequate yearly progress".
 - If a school's scores in all students subgroups are NOT high enough, then the school has failed to make adequate yearly progress. If this happens for two years in a row the school is said to be "identified for improvement".
- Districts are required by law to **notify parents** if their school is identified for improvement. They can do this through the mail or using email. In addition, the listing of schools identified for improvement, should be widely disseminated through such means as:
 - Newsletters
 - Posters
 - Web sites
 - All information must be in a language that parents can understand.
- **Public school choice** is available to all children in Title I schools identified for improvement, and must be offered to parents beginning in the first school year after a school has been determined to be identified for improvement.
- The district must provide the choice of at least 2 schools which have met the state goals for achievement. Parents can select one of those schools for their child to attend and the district will pay for transportation to the new school.

Here are the answers to some frequently asked questions about public school choice:

When should my school notify me about school choice?

Since school choice becomes available on the first day of the school year following the determination that a school is identified for improvement, you must be notified well before the beginning of the school year in which choice will be offered. For example, if your school is determined in the spring of 2003 to be identified for improvement, then you should be notified of your choice options well before the first day of school in the fall of 2003.

How will I know which schools I can transfer my child into?

When your child's school district tells you that your child is eligible for school choice because his school is identified for 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.

If I decide to move my child into another school, how long can she stay in that new school?

The law says that your child can stay in the new school as long as you want her to, right up through the highest grade offered in that school. The district will pay for her transportation as long as her original school remains in improvement status. If the original school begins to make adequate yearly progress and is no longer considered a school identified for improvement, the district won't provide free transportation any more to the new school, but your child can still stay in that school. You will then be responsible for getting your child back and forth to that school.

What if my child's school is the only one in our district, or the next nearest school is too far away?

The law says that if there are no other schools in the district that can accept your child, then the district is encouraged to make cooperating agreements with nearby districts that do have eligible schools. Even if there are no schools close enough to permit choice, your school must notify you if it is on Wisconsin's list of schools identified for improvement.

What information should I get from the eligible schools to help me decide which school to choose for my child?

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

- How do you deal with students who are having trouble in school?
- How will you help my child do better in school?
- How well do your students do in reading, English, math and other subjects?
- How has achievement in your school changed over the last few years?
- How do you teach reading and mathematics?
- What percentage of your teachers are highly qualified?
- How will you help my child prepare for college?

What if my school doesn't give me this information?

You can request it from the school district superintendent's office.

For more information about *No Child Left Behind* visit the following web sites:

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/esea/index.html>

The U.S. Department of Education's *No Child Left Behind* web site at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>

Call Parents Plus toll free at 877 384-1769 or visit our web site at <http://www.parentspluswi.org>