

Parents' Rights in Education

—A guide to the
No Child Left Behind Act



Dear Parents,

It is our hope that you will take the time to read this literature and learn more about the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. This legislation affects all schools, but is especially important to the parents of children who attend Title I schools.

As a parent, you have many rights of which you should be aware. Please take the time to read this material. If you have questions, you may call the Title I office at (423) 209-8571. We will be happy to answer your questions.

We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of your child's education. Working together, it is our desire to live up to our motto, "Title I – Making a Difference in Hamilton County."

Sincerely,

Title I Staff
Preston Gonter, Federal Programs Director

Literature provided by:
Title I

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<http://www.hcde.org/inside-hcde/divisions/federal-programs/title-1>

What is the "No Child Left Behind" Act?

It's an education act (signed into law in 2002) that aims to:

Raise accountability
by carefully measuring school progress every year

Provide more financial flexibility
by allowing federal money to be used to meet school or school district needs

Set goals
—for example, to improve student performance in math, reading and science

Improve teacher quality
—for example, by providing funds for professional development

Provide school choice
if a school does not meet specific educational standards

Make schools safer
and drug-free.



Important Notice

Please read: The publisher has taken care in the preparation of this publication, but the information it contains does not necessarily describe particular situations you may encounter. You should ask a qualified expert or professional for advice about your particular situation.

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Why should I learn about it?

Because the act can help improve your child's education. It helps:

Students

The act seeks to provide every student with a high-quality education. It helps ensure that students are:

- challenged to meet high standards
- taught by highly qualified teachers using proven teaching methods
- able to learn in a safe, drug-free environment.

Parents

Through annual state and district report cards, you can learn how well your child's school is performing. If it's not meeting specific criteria, you may be able to transfer your child to a different school.

As a parent, you play an important role in your child's education. Learn about your rights and responsibilities, and how you may act on them.

You have a right to know how your child's school is performing.

The "No Child Left Behind" Act requires states to have accountability systems for all schools and students. These systems involve:

Setting high standards

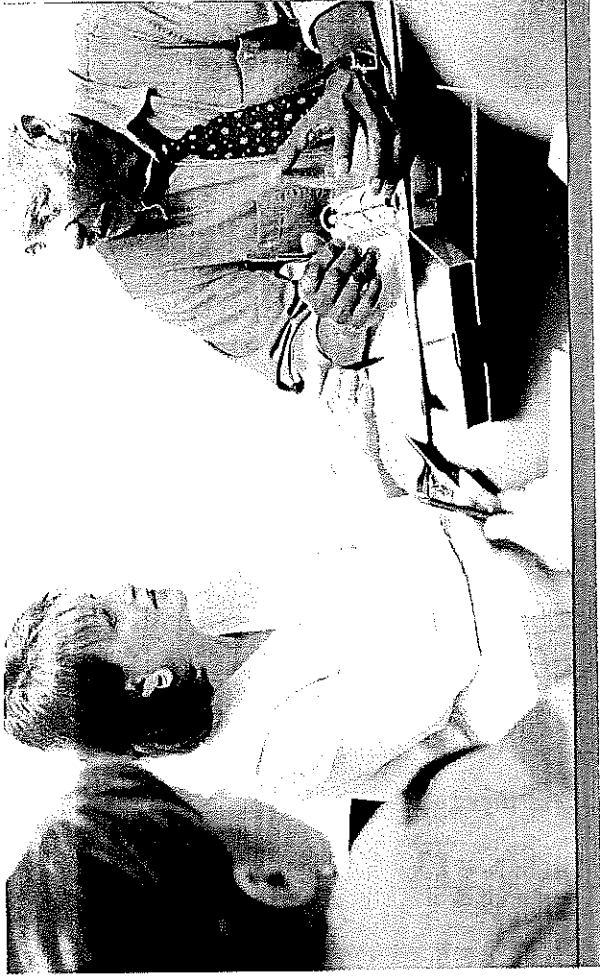
Standards explain what students should know and be able to do. The act requires states to set high standards for reading, math and science.

Testing student progress

Standards-based tests are one way parents, teachers and communities can see how students are doing in school. Testing can also help educators determine which students and schools need extra help.

Measuring each school's and district's progress

Schools must prepare students to meet state standards on tests for reading and math. The test results help determine if a school meets Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Each state determines AYP. Parents have a right to know if their child's school meets the state's goals for AYP.



Identifying schools that need improvement

Schools that do not make AYP must develop improvement plans and take other actions to meet AYP requirements.

Publishing annual district and state report cards on school performance

These show parents and other members of the community how the school is performing compared to other schools in their district and the state. They give information about:

- overall student performance on tests
- student graduation and dropout rates
- which schools need improvement
- teacher qualifications.

Be sure to review these report cards to see how your child's school is performing.

Contact the school or school district office to ask for them. Report cards must be made available through public agencies, the media or postings on the Internet.

What standards and testing mean for your child

High standards motivate students.

Setting high expectations can help children succeed in school—and in life. All schools, teachers and parents should challenge children to do their best in school. Clear standards help everyone understand what children should be learning.

Standards-based tests measure progress and achievement.

Looking at your child's test results can help you see how well he or she is performing. You can:

- check your child's progress from year to year
- compare your child's results with overall student results in the same grade.

You can work with your child and his or her teachers to help your child meet the standards.



Your child's individual test results are confidential—only you and your child's school may see them.



Teacher quality is important for your child's achievement.

The "No Child Left Behind" Act raises requirements for teachers and requires states to report on teacher quality. To help make sure your child's teachers are qualified:

Ask about each teacher's qualifications.

- if your child attends a Title I* school, you have the right to know:
 - if your child's teacher is qualified and certified to teach a certain grade or subject
 - the teacher's level of education (such as a bachelor's or master's degree)
 - what the teacher's course of study or major was
 - if your child's teacher is teaching under emergency or provisional status (as defined by your state).

Visit the classroom, if possible.

Watch how the teacher instructs and interacts with students. You may arrange a classroom visit by calling the school.

*Title I is a federal assistance program.

Reading achievement is a key focus.

Your child's reading program should use proven teaching methods. These include:

Phonemic awareness

Teachers teach students how to hear and recognize individual sounds in spoken words.

Phonics

Students learn the relationship between sounds and letters.

Vocabulary

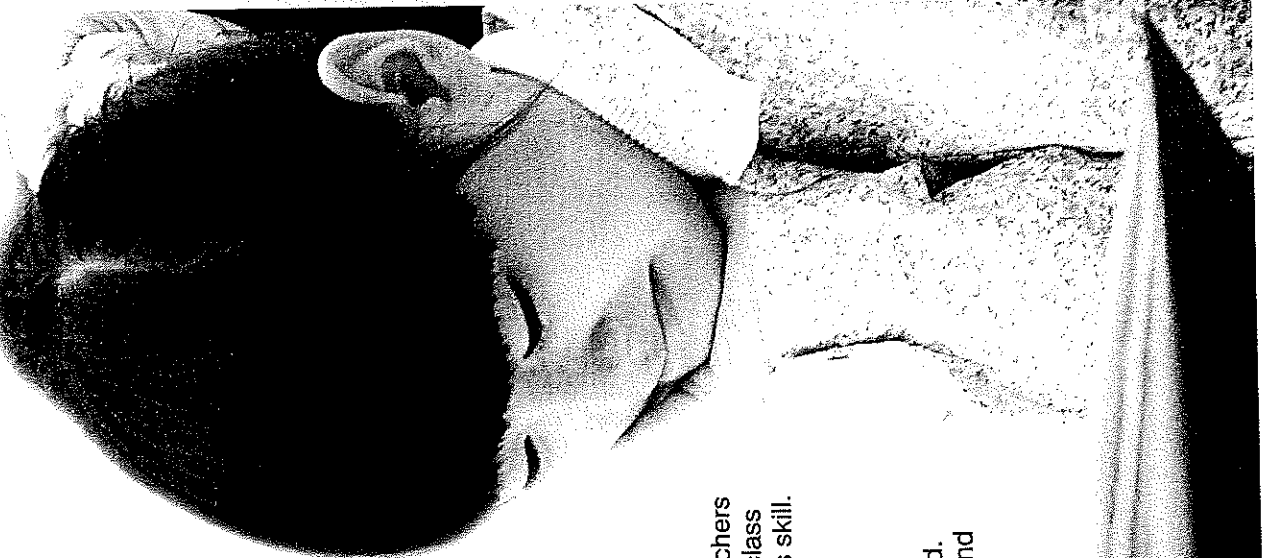
Students may receive a list of vocabulary words to study. Quizzes and tests help check students' understanding of these words.

Fluency

Students need to learn to read accurately and at a good pace. Teachers may ask students to read aloud in class to help evaluate and strengthen this skill.

Comprehension

Students should be able to discuss and write about the books they read. This helps show they understand and communicate what they read.



A good reading program also emphasizes:

The value of reading

Teachers should help foster a love of reading and encourage students to read at home and at school. A variety of books and reading materials should be available in the classroom and school libraries.

The relationship between reading and writing

Students should have many opportunities to write. Teachers should correct assignments and share them with parents.

Extra help

If you think your child is having trouble reading, find out what extra help is available—both during and after school. Share your concerns with your child's teacher.



Help your child develop a love of reading.

Make a point to:

- Read to your child every day—and ask your child to read to you. Talk about the stories. For example, ask what might have happened if the main character had made a different choice.
- Let your child see you reading books, magazines and newspapers.
- Visit the library together.

Remember, school success depends on parent involvement, too.

You have the right to send your child to a safe school.

The "No Child Left Behind" Act requires schools to report on school safety. Make a point to:

Learn about the school's safety record.
Check to see that your school is working to keep students and teachers safe by enforcing laws and school policies.

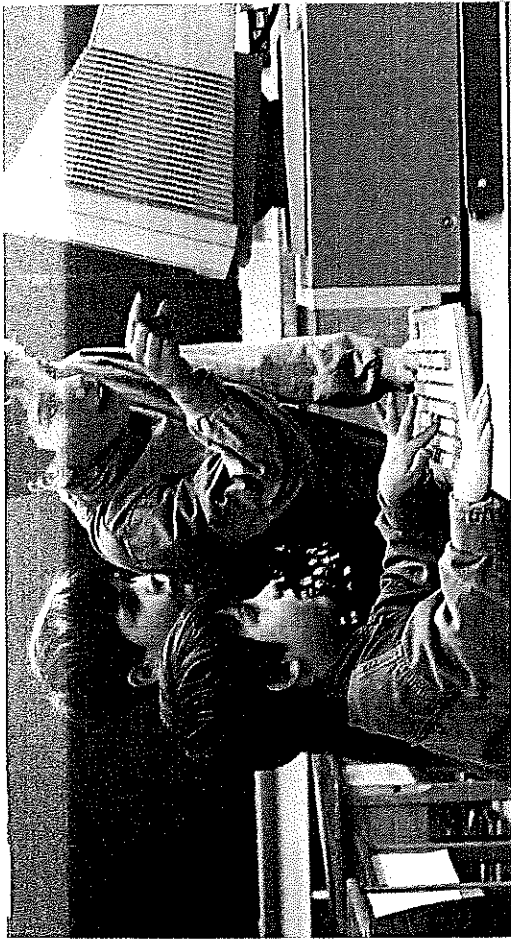
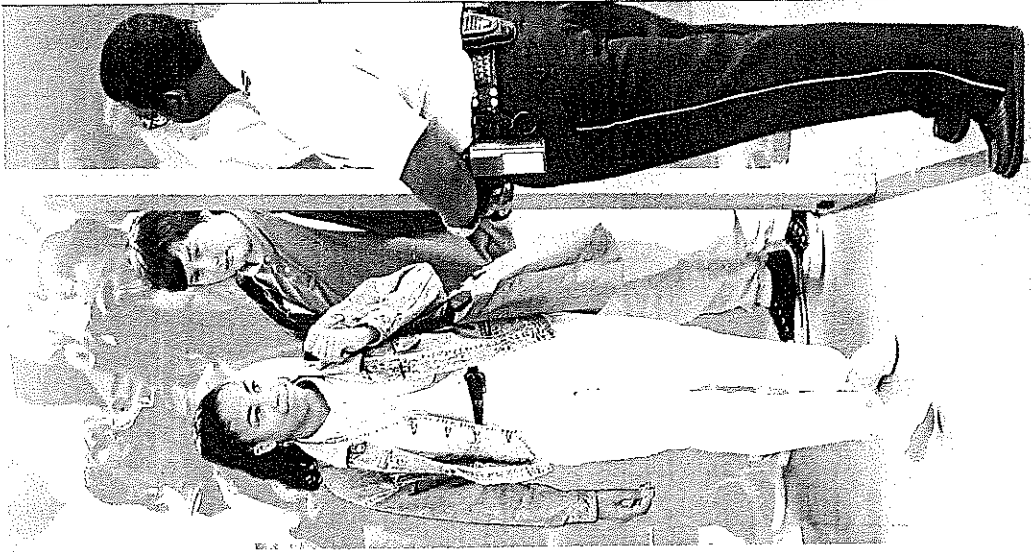
Ask about plans for keeping schools safe and drug-free.
Prevention plans should cover:

- policies for disciplining students
- security procedures
- codes of conduct that students must follow
- a crisis management plan.

Know your options.

You have the right to transfer your child to a safer public school in your district if your child:

- goes to a school that is identified as persistently dangerous (school safety doesn't improve)
- becomes a victim of a violent crime while on school property.



Other areas of focus

The "No Child Left Behind" Act seeks to:

Use technology to improve student achievement

Technology is a valuable tool that should be part of the curriculum. Find out:

- how technology fits in the school's curriculum
- how much time your child spends using technology each week.

Help Limited English Proficient (LEP) students

States and school districts must plan programs that help LEP students learn English and also meet the same standards other students must meet.

Increase math and science achievement

Schools should rely on proven teaching methods to help students excel in these areas. For example, funding may be used for:

- teacher training
- classroom materials
- new courses
- other sources that support math and science education.

What if my child's school does not improve?

If the school fails to make AYP for 2 years in a row, students may qualify for school choice.

School choice allows students to transfer to a different school.

If eligible, you may send your child to a school that is not in need of improvement or corrective action. This may include a magnet school, charter school or other school.

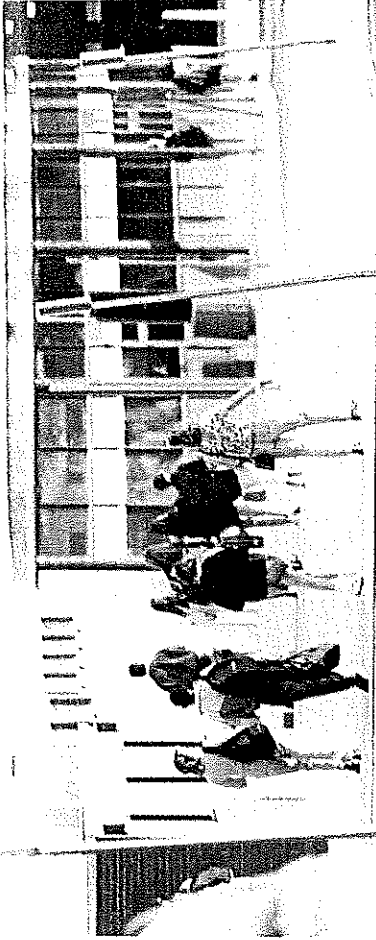
School districts must work with families to make school choice possible.

They must:

- give priority to the lowest-achieving eligible students from low-income families
- provide transportation for eligible students to attend the other school.



School choice ensures that your child will not fall behind because of his or her school environment.



What are supplemental services?

They're services provided in addition to the school's other improvement efforts. Supplemental services are:

Available to eligible students

If a school fails to meet AYP after 2 straight years, it must provide supplemental services to low-income students who continue to go to that school. Contact your state department of education to find out if your child is eligible.

Provided by a variety of organizations

If your child is eligible to receive services, your school district must give you a list of approved service providers. They may include:

- schools and school districts
 - faith-based organizations
 - other community groups that provide educational services.
- Services may be provided before or after school, on the weekends or during the summer. You may choose the program that works best for you and your child.

Paid for by your school district

In most cases, the school district pays for the supplemental services directly.

Get Involved in Your child's education.

Ask for information.

Learn more about the school's:

- curriculum and teaching methods
- plans for improvement and goals for the future.

Work with the school.

Attend meetings. Share your thoughts, concerns and ideas with those responsible for your child's educational success.

Work with your child.

- Help your child with homework.
- Ask your child questions. Show him or her that you are interested in what he or she is doing at school.
- Watch for signs that your child may be having trouble in school.

Learn more about the "No Child Left Behind" Act.

You can contact your state's Department of Education. Or visit www.nochildleftbehind.gov (the U.S. Department of Education's Web site).



Know your rights.

Review school report cards—and learn what they mean for your child.

Ask about the qualifications of your child's teachers.

Learn about the school's reading and other programs.

Know your options if your child's school does not make Adequate Yearly Progress.

Get—and stay—involved in your child's education.

Work with the school to ensure a bright future for your child!