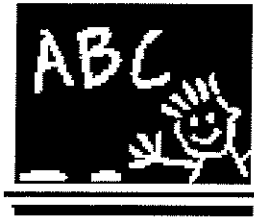


The Nuts & Bolts of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)



A Guide for Massachusetts Families

--Title I Dissemination Project --

What is the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) Act?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized by Congress in 2001, and became law in January of 2002. This legislation is called the **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**. Its goal is to ensure that all students in public school achieve high academic standards. **Title I**, a large part of NCLB, aims to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. States receive Title I funds from the federal government. These funds are allotted to school districts, then to schools, based on need. Schools can operate **targeted assistance** programs for selected at-risk students, or schools with larger percentages of disadvantaged students may have a **schoolwide program**. In schoolwide programs, Title I funds support all students in the school.

Title I services are supplementary, or in addition to regular school services - an extra boost for children in need.

If your children are in a Title I school (or district), there is a lot about the law you should know.

This pamphlet addresses the following components of No Child Left Behind (NCLB):

- The importance of family involvement & parental rights under the law
- Testing for accountability
- School report cards
- Adequate yearly progress
- Options for families, such as **school choice** and **supplemental services**
- Teacher qualifications
- Scientifically-based research
- Reading First

Testing for Accountability

Nationally, students in grades 3-8 will be tested yearly in reading and math and at least once in grades 10-12, by 2005. By 2007, students will be tested in science at least once between grades 3-5; 6-8; & 10-12.

NCLB requires that **all** children be assessed. Accommodations, such as longer test-taking time, can be made for students with disabilities or limited English. Students who are English language learners and have been in U.S. schools for three years in a row will be assessed in English.

Schools must **disaggregate**, or **separate** test results by subgroup, e.g. students from major racial and ethnic groups, limited-English proficiency, special education, etc. to show that **all** children are achieving.

States must participate in the **National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)** tests for math and reading for 4th & 8th grade students every two years, starting in 2002-2003. Students will not be penalized for NAEP test results. The results are used to show how states are performing academically, e.g. if students in a district perform poorly on the NAEP, but excel on their state test, then the state's standards may not be rigorous enough.

School Report Cards

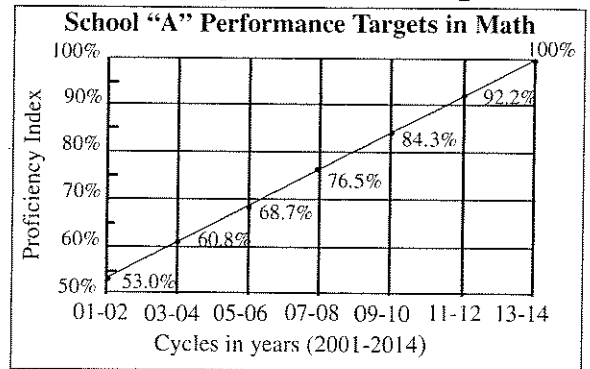
NCLB requires all states and districts to create and distribute yearly, easy-to-read **School Report Cards** that give information on districts and schools, such as:

- student achievement data on state tests (MCAS) broken into subgroups (race, gender, ethnicity, low-income, migrant or disability status, English language proficiency, etc.) as compared with district and statewide results
- percentage of students not tested (on MCAS)
- qualifications of teachers and paraprofessionals
- high school graduation and drop out rates
- if a school is in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (see next panel)

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

The primary goal of NCLB is to ensure that 100% of the nation's graduating students are **proficient** in mathematics and English Language Arts by 2013-2014, based on state-defined standards. **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** is the minimum level of academic improvement a school must achieve each year to reach that goal. In Massachusetts, MCAS scores are used to calculate AYP.

Charting AYP: An Example



Source: Above chart adapted from Massachusetts Department of Education (www.doe.mass.edu)

In 2001-2002, **School A's** proficiency index in math was calculated at 53%. This is the **starting point** for charting future progress. **School A** must get the remaining 47% of its students to perform proficiently ($100\% - 53\% = 47\%$) in twelve years (six, two-year cycles).

Here, AYP in math was calculated as such:
 $47\% / \text{six cycles} = \sim 8\%$ (average) increase needed per cycle for 100% proficiency by 2013-2014. Schools must also calculate AYP in English Language Arts (not shown on chart).

Schools receiving Title I funds who do not make AYP for two years in a row are **in need of improvement** and school officials must develop a plan to improve the school. Schools, districts, and the state will be held accountable for this progress, with consequences for those who do not improve adequately. Rewards will be given to schools who exceed their goals and/or significantly close achievement gaps between groups of students.

Options for Families

While states and local school districts help low-performing Title I schools improve, these options are available for parents and children:

School Choice

Districts must provide students attending schools **in need of improvement** the option to transfer to another public or charter school that is achieving. Parents must be notified of this option by the first day of the school year following the school being identified. Priority will be given to low-income and high at-risk students, as defined by the district. Title I monies will be used for transportation costs during the time the school is in the **needing improvement** category. Schools must make AYP for two consecutive years to get off the list.

If a student attends a persistently dangerous school, as determined by the state, or the student becomes a victim of violent crime at school, that student must be given the option to transfer.

Parents of children eligible for school choice should meet with the principal to discuss options and decide what is best.

Supplemental Services

Students attending a school that has been in need of improvement for three years in a row, and who do not choose to transfer to another school, qualify for **supplemental services**. Supplemental services provide extra help in reading, language arts, and/or math outside of school hours. The services are paid for by the district, and can include tutoring, after-school or summer programs. Priority is given to low-income, low-performing students. Districts must notify parents at least once per year on the availability of the services. Parents of eligible children can choose from a list of state-approved supplemental service providers. This list is on the MA Department of Education Web site at: www.doe.mass.edu/ses/results.asp. Again, parents of eligible students should meet with the school's principal to discuss options.

Your Children's Teachers

NCLB has raised the minimum qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals (aides) who directly instruct students in Title I funded programs.

A **highly qualified** teacher has a Bachelor's Degree (or higher), full certification, and demonstrated knowledge in their subject area and teaching methods. Paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma AND an Associate's Degree **or** one of the following: two years of higher education (48 credits) **or** a pass on a formal assessment of their knowledge in reading, writing, math, and teaching ability. Teachers of core subjects hired before Jan. 8, 2002 must become **highly qualified** to teach those subjects by 2006, if they are not already. Teachers hired after Jan. 8 must already be highly qualified. Paraprofessionals must meet their requirements, as outlined in the law, within this same time frame.

Scientifically-Based Research

Staff in Title I programs must use teaching methods & programs that have been proven to work based on reliable evidence. For example, the Report of the National Reading Panel (2000) determined that developing these five skills is essential for reading success:

- ☆ **Phonemic Awareness:** the ability to hear and identify sounds in spoken words
- ☆ **Phonics:** the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language
- ☆ **Fluency:** the capacity to read text accurately and quickly
- ☆ **Vocabulary:** the words students must know to communicate effectively
- ☆ **Comprehension:** the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read

NCLB strives for all children to become strong readers. The U.S. Department of Education created **Reading First**, a grant program whose funds support high-quality, K-3 reading instruction focusing on the above five skills. Though there is less conclusive research in mathematics, teachers should use available information about best practices, e.g. using manipulatives to reinforce concepts, relying less on drill-oriented worksheets and formula memorization, etc.

The Importance of Family Involvement

Children have a greater chance at success when parents and school staff work together. To help children succeed, parents can:

○ **Get involved.** Title I funds earmarked for parental involvement efforts go directly to the schools. Parents can give input on how that money is used. Schools must build parental capacity!

○ **Help create and sign a school-parent compact.** Schools that receive Title I funds must work with parents to create a compact that outlines how the school, family, and child will share responsibility for achievement. Compacts should address each student's individual academic needs.

○ **Be proactive.** See if your district has a family resource center. Attend workshops, parent-teacher conferences, family nights & other events to find out how you can help your children learn at home.

* The word "parent" refers to anyone who is responsible for the care of a child, such as a guardian, grandparent, etc.

Parents Have the Power

Under NCLB, parents of children in Title I schools have the right to:

- know their children's teachers' qualifications.
- know if paraprofessionals are providing services to their children and what the paraprofessionals' qualifications are. For example, an aide assisting your child with reading should be qualified to do so.
- know if their children have been taught by one who is not highly qualified for four weeks or more.
- know if their children's school is in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The school must notify parents on how they can become involved in school improvement efforts.
- help create and/or review the school's Title I plan and program evaluation, and have input into how Title I monies are spent for parental activities.

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www.channel1.com/title1**

Sources for this pamphlet Massachusetts Department of Education (www.doe.mass.edu) and United States Department of Education, Office of Public Affairs, Washington, DC (www.ed.gov). *No Child Left Behind: A Parent's Guide*, 2003.