

What are the basic skills for parent involvement and community organizing?

Rules of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).



Action #1 – Get more involved in your children’s schools.

- Children do better in school when their parents are involved.
- Parents are most effective when they get involved on a regular basis. Don’t wait for problems to happen.
- Getting involved means helping your child with homework, talking each day about school issues, reviewing school reports and test results, and meeting with your child’s teachers.
- NCLB gives parents many new ways to get involved in their children’s education. You can use NCLB to increase your power and confidence.

Action #2 – Help community groups to get involved with education issues.

- Most school problems affect many children in the school system. The best solution for your own children may also help other children.
- Parents are more powerful when they act together, instead of acting alone.
- It is sometimes safer to do things in a group, instead of speaking out by yourself.
- Many school problems cannot be solved quickly. A group of people can more easily share the work over a longer time period.
- School officials may take your concerns more seriously when you are supported by a larger group.
- NCLB gives community groups many new ways to organize for positive school reform. You can use NCLB to push for changes in the education system.
- Does your community have groups working on school issues? Is a new group needed?

Action #3 – Practice the basic skills of parent involvement and community organizing.

- Take notes of all conversations with school officials. Keep all notes in a single notebook.
- For each person you speak with, write down their name, title, phone number, and address.
- Go to the school and make copies of the student records for your children.
- Ask for copies of all official decisions and policies in writing.
- Write letters to confirm any agreement reached about how the situation will be handled.
- For all letters that you write, sign your name at the bottom and put the date at the top. Keep a copy of all letters. Consider sending your letters by certified mail with a return receipt.
- Keep all papers in a central file in a safe place.
- Talk about the problem with other students, parents, teachers, and community leaders.
- Ask a friend to attend meetings with you. Friends can help to ask questions and take notes.
- Learn about your legal rights. Call the Education Law Center for information and assistance.

See the other side for more information.

Education Law Center/Penna. School Reform Network – ELC/PSRN

Offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh

215-238-6970 www.elc-pa.org 412-391-5225

ELC/PSRN works with many parents and groups. Please call us for assistance with individual school problems or more general problems with the education system. We look forward to speaking with your group. If your child’s rights are violated under any law, ask for legal assistance. ELC operates a HelpLine at the numbers above. The ELC website (www.elc-pa.org) contains fact sheets and information about other organizations and sources of help.

Action #4 – Protect your individual rights and the rights of your own children.

1. Speak with your children's teachers.
 - a. It is usually best to call teachers and schedule an appointment.
 - b. Consider whether you want to meet with the teachers individually or in a group.
 - c. Ask to see examples of your child's work.
 - d. Ask the teachers to describe your child's strengths and weaknesses.
 - e. Ask the teachers to make a plan to improve your child's behavior and academic achievement.
 - f. Does your child need extra help, such as make-up work or tutoring?
 - g. Does your child need special services because of a disability?
 - h. Does your child need help learning English?
2. Speak with the principal.
 - a. Sometimes it is best to first speak with an assistant principal or a school counselor.
 - b. All parents should be able to speak with the principal by phone or in person.
 - c. Consider scheduling an appointment.
 - d. Consider whether it will help for your child's teachers to attend the meeting.
 - e. Before the meeting, write down the key facts, your questions, and your requests.
 - f. You can always ask to continue the discussion at a second meeting.
 - g. No one should pressure you to make a final decision before you are ready.
3. If verbal conversations do not work, try putting your request or concerns in writing.
4. If you are not satisfied with the principal's response, you can take your concerns to the superintendent and the local school board. You may have a right to other legal appeals.

Action #5 – Use community organizing to solve school problems.

1. Organize a small group of parents who feel the same way. Does your community already have a group working on similar issues? How about your church or the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)?
2. Investigate the problem and document what is really going on. Get evidence to show how the school district is violating the requirements of NCLB or other laws.
3. Make a written proposal for changing the local policy on this subject.
4. Meet with the school principal and present your written proposal.
5. If the principal refuses to make changes, the group may need to take the proposal to the superintendent and the local school board.
6. Send out a press release, hold a press conference, and speak with other elected officials.
7. It is sometimes possible to file a legal complaint with the state or federal government.

GET INVOLVED TODAY. YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

How can you get more information?

- See other ELC fact sheets about NCLB and many other education issues. Visit our website or call our offices. *Contact information is on the front of this page.*
- Call ELC for help with individual school problems for your children.
- Ask ELC to come speak with your community group or church.