

How can you use NCLB to help your own children do better in school?

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



Why is it important for children to do well in school?

Research shows that failing to get a high school diploma often leads to unemployment and low wages. But a diploma by itself is not enough. The diploma must represent a high quality public education. No child should be left behind by our public schools. All students need to learn more knowledge and skills than ever before. To get a good job, most young people must continue their education by attending some kind of technical college or university.

Can NCLB really help your children?

Yes. NCLB is a controversial law. But NCLB provides new tools that parents can use to help their children do better in school.

What are the 10 best ways that you can use NCLB to improve your children's education?

Other fact sheets from the Education Law Center explain the following items in more detail. This flyer gives a basic list of the most important tools that can help your children.

1. **Classroom Involvement.** Parents have a right to communicate with teachers, principals, and other school officials. The communication should be regular, two-way, and meaningful. Parents may communicate about education issues such as the curriculum, classroom instruction, student progress, and student support services. Parents also have the right to meet with teachers, receive frequent student progress reports, and observe the classroom. *Students do better when their parents are more involved in school.*
2. **High Expectations.** Teachers must challenge all students with high expectations. They must teach students the knowledge and skills listed in state guidelines for each subject and grade. *Look at the books and assignments given to your children. Compare these materials to the state academic guidelines for each class. Ask teachers to challenge your children, instead of giving them a "watered down" education. See www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed.*
3. **Standardized Tests.** Teachers must use PSSA score reports to help individual students. *Talk with your children's teachers about the PSSA score reports. Ask the teachers to make a written plan to address the academic strengths and weaknesses of your children.*
4. **Quality Teachers.** All teachers and paraprofessionals must be "highly qualified". *Ask the principal for the qualifications of your children's teachers. For teachers who are not highly qualified, ask the principal to give them extra training, support, and supervision.*

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.

5. **Student Support.** Teachers must identify children most in need of extra assistance. Schools must give the extra help without delay and design a support plan for each individual student. *If your children are struggling in school, ask for parent conferences, remedial or make-up work, tutoring services, adult mentoring, career guidance, or behavior counseling.*
6. **Tutoring Programs.** Students can get tutoring through several programs. Some programs are available for everyone. Other programs are only in schools with low PSSA scores. The NCLB tutoring program is called “supplemental educational services”. *If your children are struggling, ask the school to enroll them in a tutoring program.* www.pde.state.pa.us/tutoring
7. **Remedial Programs.** School districts can use NCLB funds to support remedial programs for students before school, after school, and during the summer. These programs should focus on academic achievement.
Ask the school district how your children can participate in these remedial programs.
8. **English Language Learners.** Schools must identify students who are English language learners (ELL). Schools may offer separate programs for ELL students. Schools should notify parents before placing students into an ELL program. Parents have the right to decide whether or not their children will participate. If the ELL program is not effectively teaching students, then the state must help the school district to make improvements. In addition, ELL students can receive accommodations when taking standardized tests like the PSSA.
Contact the school if you want changes for your children’s ELL program. The school should also work with you to determine accommodations for standardized tests like the PSSA.
9. **Students with Disabilities.** Children with disabilities may receive special education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Other state and federal laws also protect the rights of children with disabilities. The school must ask for parental permission before evaluating a child for disabilities. The school must also ask for parental permission before giving special education classes or other services to a child. Most children with disabilities should be mainstreamed – taught in the “least restrictive environment”. Children can receive accommodations when taking standardized tests like the PSSA. Parents have strong legal rights to file appeals and complaints about problems with special education.
For more information, see ELC/PSRN publications on various special education topics.
10. **Student Transfers.** After the state puts a school on the “Improvement List” for the second year and any later year, the school district must allow parents to transfer their children out of that school. Students can transfer into a school making adequate yearly progress (AYP). The district must provide transportation for students who transfer. Priority is given to low achieving, low income students. Schools on the “Dangerous List” must also allow transfers.
If you want your children to transfer to a better school, ask the principal for a transfer application form. Also ask for a copy of the transfer rules.
For AYP results, see www.paayp.com. For “Dangerous Schools”, see www.pde.state.pa.us/svcs_students/cwp/view.asp?a=175&O=95273&svcs_studentsNav=/6148/&svcs_studentsNav=/

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.