

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002

The purpose of this law is to ensure equal opportunity for all children to receive a high quality education and that all students reach proficiency on assessments. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has several requirements that include: holding schools accountable for student achievement, using programs that are research-based, hiring highly qualified teachers and involving parents in their children's learning.

The law holds schools accountable for results. Schools demonstrate that they are teaching all children the approved academic content standards through the use of standardized tests. In Pennsylvania these tests are called the PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment). The PSSA is administered to children in grades 3 – 8 and grade 11 in reading, writing, math and science. Parents, teachers and school administrators are notified of the scores. Student scores are broken into four categories:

- Advanced (superior academic performance; indicates in-depth understanding of the standards).
- Proficient (satisfactory academic performance; demonstrates a solid understanding of the standards)
- Basic (marginal academic performance; demonstrates partial understanding of standards)
- Below Basic (inadequate academic performance; demonstrates little understanding of the standards)

Schools are evaluated through the measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) towards meeting the goal of all children being proficient in academic content standards by the year 2014. Pennsylvania set a targeted percentage of children who should reach proficient levels for each year until 2014. The PSSA scores for all students in the school (or district) and sub-groups of students, school attendance rates, graduation rates, teacher quality and school safety are all a part of AYP.

Schools and districts must produce report cards that demonstrate this progress. Your school should provide its report card to you. You can also access any school or district report at www.paayp.com. You will notice on the report card the percentage of students who scored in each of the four PSSA levels. You will also see the distinction between all students and sub-groups (poor and minority students, special education students and English Language Learners). NCLB requires schools to close the achievement gap that exists for these students---to bring all students to high performance levels. There are rewards for schools that meet or exceed AYP and sanctions for schools that do not.

NCLB requires schools to offer public school choice to families whose children are in “schools in need of improvement” or those that are determined to be “persistently dangerous or unsafe”. It also requires schools to offer Supplemental Education Services (tutoring in reading and math) to the students with the greatest need.



Schools must use programs, practices and teaching methods that have been proven to work through sound scientific research. Schools must demonstrate that there are highly qualified (certified) teachers in each classroom. Parents are notified by the school when their child is being taught by an individual who does not meet the requirements to be considered highly qualified.

A key provision of NCLB is its emphasis on active family involvement with their children's learning as well as with the education system. Title I regulations of NCLB define how federal funds can be used to help low-achieving students increase their level of achievement and involve parents. The Title I regulations of the law define parent involvement as "the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities". NCLB allows for states and school districts to use federal education funds to address academic needs identified in their schools.

Additional information about NCLB in Pennsylvania is available at www.pde.state.pa.us. Go to the K-12 tab and you will find many topics of interest.

The Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center (PA PIRC) recognizes that school staff and families can work together to improve student achievement and encourage students to reach high levels of success. Community-based and faith-based organizations can also make meaningful contributions through collaborative partnerships with families and schools. PA PIRC is committed to:

- Increasing parents' understanding of NCLB.
- Improving and expanding programs for parents of preschool children.
- Enhancing parent and community engagement with schools.
- Coordinating and disseminating information about student achievement, best practices for parents and teachers, and training opportunities.

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