



www.mdpirc.org

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No Child Left Behind Fact Sheet Public School Choice

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, parents are guaranteed important insight into their children's education, the professional qualifications of their teachers, and the quality of the schools they attend. It ensures that parents have the information they need to make well-informed choices for their children, more effectively share responsibility with their children's schools, and help those schools develop effective and successful academic programs.

Among the NCLB's key programs is Public School Choice, which provides parents whose children are attending a school "in need of improvement" with the option to transfer their child to a school that meets Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks. Under NCLB, schools are required to share certain information with parents about their child's education – for example, the child's progress in reading, math, and science, as well as the overall performance of the child's school on state tests in these subjects. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE, www.marylandpublicschools.org) information is used to determine the Title I schools "in need of improvement". If your child's school is identified as a school "in need of improvement," your child is eligible for School Choice.

The Title I Public School Choice program allows you to send your child to a school "not in need of improvement" if your child's school does not meet Maryland State academic standards for AYP for two consecutive years. Your child's school must offer at least two options of other public schools in the same district that your child may attend. If you elect to send your child to a new school, the current school must provide transportation at no cost to your family. Funding restrictions, however, may limit the amount of children who are able to take advantage of School Choice; therefore priority is given to students with the greatest needs.

If your child's school is rated "in need of improvement," the school must notify you about its AYP and about other school choices before the new school year begins. The school must also inform you of how the current school will make improvements in student achievement, information on who can answer any questions you may have, and details about the other schools' academic performance and overall quality. The school must send you information in an easy-to-understand form, such as a letter, and in a language you can understand.

If a school is identified as "in need of improvement", it does not mean that the school is not a good school. In fact, the school could be high-performing on the average, but needs to work on improving its performance in one area, such as reading for English language learners.

For more information on School Choice and other educational topics, please visit www.mdpirc.org or contact the Maryland State Parental Information and Resource Center (MD PIRC).