

OHIO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT NCLB

School Improvement

NOTE: This website reflects the *current best understanding* of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The website will be revised as federal rules and guidance become available.

How does a school building get into School Improvement status under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act?

NCLB requires the identification of schools most in need of improvement and that data be used to define a starting point for developing adequate yearly progress. The federal legislation allows schools and communities receiving federal Title I monies to begin a transition to more rigorous accountability provisions, while remaining focused on the schools most in need of improvement.

The formula identifies schools that have not met the requirements of 2.5% progress **and** the proficiency threshold (42%) for **two consecutive years** in **any** of the following tests: fourth-grade mathematics, fourth-grade reading, sixth-grade mathematics, sixth-grade reading.

How was the baseline for performance estimated?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires the state to use as a baseline the performance of the school at the 20th percentile by enrollment (sorted by performance) or the lowest achievement of the subgroups, whichever is higher -- in this case, the school at the 20th percentile.

The school at the 20th percentile was identified in the following manner. First, each school's percentage of students proficient was computed; and schools were sorted from least proficient to most proficient. Next, the enrollment of the least proficient schools was summed until that total matched 20% of statewide enrollment. When the cumulative percentage of enrollment reached 20% of the statewide enrollment, that school's percentage of students proficient provides the baseline. The 42 percent estimate of the baseline was calculated using the proficiency test results for all students with valid scaled scores on the preliminary Spring 2002 proficiency tests.

What are the NCLB consequences of being identified as a school in need of improvement?

During YEAR 1 of School Improvement, schools must establish a school improvement process that includes the following steps:

* The school must develop a two-year school improvement plan covering 10 requirements identified in NCLB, Section 1116 with parents, staff, local school district officials and outside experts;

- * The school district must approve the plan and provide technical assistance to assist the school with implementation of the plan;
- * The school must notify parents about public school choice and transportation, and provide options to transfer to all students (if insufficient resources, priority goes to the lowest achieving children from low income families);
- * The school must reserve 10% of its Title I building allocation for professional development activities as described in NCLB Section 1116.

During YEAR 2 of School Improvement, schools must continue the process in place from the previous year (including an annual use of 10 percent of building Title I funds for professional development), plus notify parents and provide supplemental educational services for children from low-income families.

During YEAR 3 of School Improvement, schools must continue the process in place from the previous year, plus the school district must take at least one of the following corrective actions:

- * Replace key staff;
- * Adopt new, scientifically research-based curriculum and provide professional development;
- * Decrease management authority;
- * Employ an outside consultant to advise school management;
- * Extend school day or school year;
- * Restructure the internal school organization.

How does a school get out of School Improvement?

In order for schools to get out of School Improvement, they must make adequate yearly progress (a formula established by the federal government) for two out of three consecutive years.

Who gets priority for services under public school choice and supplemental educational services?

In making decisions regarding public school choice and supplemental services, the district needs to develop a policy consistent with the law. Even though individual buildings are identified, ultimately the district must have a policy that provides fair access to students from each of the buildings identified.

In relation to public school choice, NCLB states that in providing the option to transfer, the district shall give priority to the lowest achieving children from low-income families. All children attending a building identified for school improvement are eligible for public school choice – there is no prohibition or limitation related to poverty, participation in Title I or grade-level testing. The law provides the priority stated above in the event that the number of families desiring to exercise this option exceeds the capacity or funding available.

Must a building identified for School Improvement develop a school improvement plan?

Within three months after identification, the school building must develop and/or revise a School Improvement Plan. This plan must involve parents, school staff, school district officials and outside experts.

Will Title I School Improvement buildings identified under the recent listing, who are currently operating with a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) developed prior to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, be required to develop a new CIP?

The district is responsible for approving a building "improvement plan" that covers a two-year period and meets a set of criteria described in No Child Left Behind Section 1116. If the current plan fits the criteria, is less than two years old, and is getting the types of results necessary to remove the school from School Improvement status, no changes would be required. If any of the above conditions are not met, the school should review the plan since the district will need to take corrective action in year three.

When do sanctions apply to school districts, such as the option for parents to transfer a child to another public school?

Public school choice for Title I-served school buildings that are in school improvement status takes effect at the start of the 2002-2003 school year. While identification of School Improvement status will occur in all buildings, the federal law sanctions will apply to Title I served buildings. Parents may not transfer their children to another public school in School Improvement status.

Will there be any differences in the implementation of School Improvement sanctions for targeted assistance buildings versus school-wide program buildings?

There are no differences between targeted assistance and school-wide program buildings in relation to public school choice, since all students in the building are eligible. There is no difference in supplemental services in that services, according to NCLB, appear to be available only to an eligible child from a low-income family (free/reduced lunch).

Which students are eligible for transfer?

All students in a school improvement building are eligible for public school choice.

What if a school accepting transfer students from schools identified for improvement cannot accommodate the transfers?

There currently is no guidance as to what limits can legitimately be placed on the number of students transferred. At some point, the number of students wishing to transfer might reasonably be greater than the space available at the receiving school(s). Under those circumstances, the public school must give priority to the lowest achieving children from low-income families.

What happens if all buildings within a district are in School Improvement status?

Districts with all buildings under School Improvement are encouraged to develop cooperative agreements with neighboring districts to the extent practicable. Transportation costs can be provided through Title I funds within the restrictions established under the NCLB law.

When are school buildings required to provide supplemental services?

The supplemental services sanction begins fall 2002 for school buildings that are identified as being in year two of School Improvement Status.

Has a limit been set on how much money a parent might request for supplemental instruction?

The law limits the amount to be expended per pupil, but that figure will vary by district and by student. The district will need to compare the actual cost of providing services for each eligible student with a formula amount for the district, and then pay the lower cost.

What are the communication implications for the NCLB School Improvement?

The release of the school improvement information provides an opportunity to communicate information about schools. It is an opportunity to discuss successes and challenges and explain the changes that are underway or planned. It is a chance to publicize changes that are producing results and to discuss the hard work required to meet the new expectations of the NCLB law.

This information, provided by the Ohio Department of Education, reflects the *current best understanding* of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Questions about School Improvement Status may be directed to the Ohio Department of Education Office of Reform and Federal Student Programs (614) 466-4161.

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URL:

http://www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/superintendent/School_Improvement_FAQ_July19.asp