

No Child Left Behind *(adapted from greatschools.net)*

The *No Child Left Behind Act* took effect at the start of the 2002-2003 school year.

Components of the law include:

- By 2005, every state must test all students annually in reading and math in grades 3 through 8. By 2007, students will be tested in science, too.
- States must demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” toward state learning standards for all groups of students (including economically disadvantaged students, racial/ethnic groups, disabled students and limited English speakers). The goal is 100% proficiency for all students in 12 years.
- There must be well-qualified teachers in every classroom by the fall of 2005. Specifically, elementary school teachers must have a bachelor's degree and pass a rigorous test in core curriculum areas. Middle and high school teachers must demonstrate competency in the subject area they teach by passing a test or by completing an academic major, graduate degree or comparable coursework. These requirements already apply to all new hires.
- Primary grade teachers must deliver reading instruction in grades K through 3 based on “scientifically based” reading research.
- Schools that receive Title I funds from the government (two-thirds of all schools) and don't make adequate yearly progress face consequences:
 - Schools that haven't made progress for two consecutive school years (commonly called “failing schools”) are identified as needing school improvement. Every student in the school will be given the option to transfer to a better-performing school in the district, with free transportation included. School districts can't use lack of capacity as a reason to deny a transfer, but they have some flexibility in meeting this requirement. They may sign contracts with neighboring districts to accept students from failing schools, contract with cyber schools, create schools within schools, offer supplemental services a year early, hire more teachers, add portables or build new classrooms at more successful schools.
 - After three years, the school must also provide "supplemental education services" to disadvantaged children who remain at the school. Those services can include tutoring, remedial classes, after-school services and summer school programs.
 - After four years, the district must take corrective actions to improve the school, such as replacing certain staff or fully implementing a new curriculum.
 - After five years, the school is identified for restructuring and arrangements must be made for alternative governance actions, such as a state takeover, the hiring of a private management contractor, converting to a charter school or significant staff restructuring.

Rewards for Schools

There are rewards for schools that close achievement gaps between groups of students or exceed academic achievement goals. States can use federal funds to pay teachers bonuses, and they can designate schools that have made the greatest achievement gains as "Distinguished Schools." Other financial benefits of *No Child Left Behind* are:

- Grants for teacher training. Parents should be aware that districts have flexibility in how they can spend federal funds designed to find and retain quality teachers, including alternative certification, merit pay and bonuses for teachers of high-need subjects such as math and science.
- Grants for reading instruction. A key component of *No Child Left Behind* is a new national initiative called Reading First that aims to help every child learn to read. Almost \$1 billion will be distributed each year over the next six years to states submitting grant proposals for reading instruction based on "scientifically based" research in kindergarten through third grade.
- Flexibility in spending federal funds. School districts have considerable leeway in spending up to 50% of their non-Title I funds (the biggest chunk of federal funding, much of which targets disadvantaged children) in categories such as teacher quality, technology, after-school learning and Safe and Drug-Free schools. For example, a district may decide to spend 50% of its federal technology funds on recruiting quality teachers instead of on technology.

Public Accountability

All schools and school districts are required to make annual report cards available to the public. The report cards must give details on:

- * Student academic achievement for all student groups
- * A comparison of students at the basic, proficient and advanced levels of academic achievement within the school district and compared to other students statewide
- * High school graduation rates and dropout rates
- * The professional qualifications of teachers
- * The percentage of students not tested
- * The names of schools identified as "in need of improvement"

The U.S. Department of Education is also paying for states to participate in reading and math assessments of fourth and eighth grade students every two years by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Doing so allows parents to compare how students are performing in different states.

For more details on the *No Child Left Behind Act*, visit the U.S. Department of Education's NCLB Web sites at www.nclb.gov/ or www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/

According to the U. S Department of Education, these are Key Elements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB):

KEY ELEMENTS OF NCLB

Professional Development. *No Child Left Behind* includes about \$3 billion in the Teacher and Principal Quality Training and Recruitment Fund. The money is designed to help states and school districts improve teacher and principal quality and recruit quality staff.

School systems also are required to ensure they have highly qualified teachers by 2005. States will have more flexibility in deciding how to use their teacher professional development money.

Accountability. A key element of the plan is that states and school districts must develop accountability systems. School districts are required to test students' reading and mathematics skills every year in grades three through eight, beginning in 2005-2006. Science tests will be added the following year.

If students fail to consistently meet standards, schools risk losing federal dollars. Those that meet and exceed standards will be eligible for additional funds. Students in consistently low-performing schools must be given the chance to transfer to higher-performing schools, at district expense.

Schools are required to use practices and methods that are "scientifically based."

Alignment with Standards. Implementing the testing and accountability programs is in the forefront of many people's minds. According to information from the Department of Education, states are required to have assessments that align with their standards. The department will be seeking input from educators and other stakeholders to develop rules about standards and assessments.