

AFT on Public School Choice

No
Child
Left
Behind

THE REAUTHORIZED ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

What NCLB Says

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, requires school districts to give students the option of transferring to another public school if their current school fails to make sufficient academic progress—Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)—as defined by the law. Districts must not only provide parents with the choice of at least two other public schools that have met the law's performance benchmarks, but also must provide transportation for the students who transfer. Private school choice is not included in this provision.

Students in schools that have not made AYP for two or more consecutive years are eligible to use the public school choice provision. All students in the school are eligible to transfer, but the lowest-achieving children from low-income families are given priority.

A school district must provide public school choice until the designated school is removed from the school improvement list by making AYP for two consecutive years.

Under NCLB regulations, school districts cannot deny students the option to transfer by claiming lack of capacity or health and safety reasons. Further, states may not use laws that limit class sizes to deny transfer requests. School districts must either create additional capacity or provide parents with other choices.

Where AFT Stands

The AFT believes all students deserve to attend high-quality public schools. Excellence should be the standard for every school. NCLB gives students attending low-performing schools the option to transfer into higher-performing schools. Thus, districts spend Title I funds to transport children to other schools, leaving them with even fewer resources to devote to improvement efforts. NCLB's transfer provisions are not backed by research, and few parents choose to have their children transfer.

If students do transfer from currently low-performing schools, a separate stream of money—not the limited Title I funds—should pay the transportation costs.

The AFT believes we should concentrate our efforts on improving low-performing schools by making sure that they adopt research-based, proven reforms like smaller class sizes and additional supports for struggling students. The AFT's Redesigning Schools to Raise Achievement (RSRA) program helps locals forge partnerships with school district leaders to turn around low-performing schools, and provides technical assistance in applying the proven approaches it recommends.

For more information on the RSRA program and the No Child Left Behind Act, visit our Web site at www.aft.org/topics/nclb.



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