



# New York State Parental Information and Resource Center

## Technical Assistance Guide

### Communicating with Parents about School Choice and SES

#### **Schools in Need of Improvement-**

Under the NCLB law, all schools must make adequate yearly progress (AYP), measured by the state standardized tests that students take. If a school does not make AYP for two years in a row, in the same subject and grade, the school is identified as in need of improvement.

#### **Public School Choice-**

Parents of children who attend Title I schools that are in need of improvement have a choice. A parent can ask for a child to be transferred to a higher performing public school in the same district.

#### **Supplemental Educational Services**

**(SES)** provide free tutoring or extra classes to help students catch up if they are behind in important subjects like math, language arts, or reading. SES happens outside of the regular school day (before or after school, on weekend, or in the summer). Parents may have to provide transportation.

Visit [www.nyspirc.org](http://www.nyspirc.org) for family Fact Sheets on School Choice and SES.

NCLB is a complex law that many parents are unfamiliar with. Parents depend on communications from the school or district to understand their NCLB options. Information should be provided using clear and simple language or many parents may not get the intended message. In addition, information should be available in all of the languages spoken in your school or district.

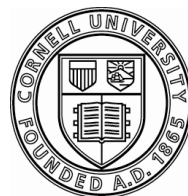
#### **What information should be communicated?**

- Notification of the school's *needs improvement* status and the choice options available to families
- Student eligibility for School Choice and SES
- Details about the school's improvement plan
- General information about NCLB and accountability

#### **When should information be communicated?**

A timely notice should allow enough time for parents to make an informed decision about selecting a school or SES provider.

- Districts are required to notify parents at least 14 days before the school year begins if their child is eligible to transfer to another school under NCLB.
- Districts required to provide SES must annually notify parents of the availability of the services, including contact information for approved providers in the school district.



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## How should information be communicated?

Information should be sent in multiple ways making it easier for families to process and understand.

- Provide direct and specific information explaining what the school is doing to improve, what is available in other schools and how students become eligible for SES.
- Clearly indicate which schools are eligible as options for school choice and which providers are offering SES services and how to contact them.
- Include details about the application process, enrollment dates and deadlines. For SES, explain that the services are free but that parents should still consider information such as how many sessions their child could have with each provider, how many hours per session, and how many other children will be taught at the same time.
- Encourage parents to contact the school district to speak with a staff member who can talk directly with a parent and explain their options more fully.
- Call or visit parents who made choices that were not valid or who submitted incomplete forms. A proactive approach can generate more parent involvement and buy-in.

Provide parents with information through a variety of delivery methods such as:

- Repeat mailings
- Automated phone calls
- Web sites and e-mail
- District information sessions
- Involvement by local organizations
- Advertisements in community newspapers
- Providing materials at local PTA/PTO meetings
- Follow-up notes sent home with students

## Using Community Networking for Communication

Using the informal communication networks of a community may be one of the most effective ways of getting information to parents. Working with respected community leaders, faith-based organizations, civic groups, business partners, and local education groups is an approach to encourage parents to take advantage of their options. Stressing the importance of parental choice, community leaders can emphasize parents' responsibility to use this opportunity to further their children's academic progress. People often receive and trust information more readily when it comes from their personal networks and those they know.

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