

A Parent's Guide

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION AND WHERE TO GO FOR SUPPORT



BE THE POWER BEHIND YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION.

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Is Your Child Getting the Education He or She Needs?

Parenting doesn't end when your child enters the school building. In fact, new laws give you more influence on your children's schooling than ever before. Your children deserve a good education. You — as parents — have the power to make sure they get it. **Parent Power Works** is here to help you:

- Understand your rights under the law and the available services and benefits;
- Ask the 'right' questions about your child's education;
- Understand the public school options for your child;
- Make informed decisions about your child's education; and

- Find local groups trained to help you get the most out of your child's education and improve your school.

Know your rights. Ask questions. Take action.

Where to start? This brochure outlines the questions you should ask and the answers you should expect. It briefly describes your rights and how new education laws give you added authority when dealing with the education system.

Parents have more power than ever.

Too many students leave the public school system without the basic skills they need to succeed in life. Parents often are painfully aware of the schools' problems but don't know what to do.

Recent changes in federal law give parents the power to demand a high-quality education for their children. Each state has a program that holds schools responsible for the academic progress of all students. The schools, in turn, are accountable to you, the parents. **Parent Power Works** can help you join with others to make sure your children get the education they deserve.

Understanding Education Lingo

What are academic standards?

These are statements, set by each state, that describe what K-12 students should know and be able to do in reading and writing, mathematics, science and social studies.

There's lots of talk about accountability. Exactly what does that mean?

It means that schools and school systems are responsible for educating students in such a way that they can meet the state's academic standards. Under the federal law called *No Child Left Behind*, the progress of every public school student in grades 3 through 8 must be measured every year in reading, writing and mathematics, and at least once during grades 10 through 12. Science will be added in 2008.



Visit our website at www.BeThePower.org



The results of these tests are used to create required public report cards that describe the progress of the state, district and individual schools. Parents can check these report cards to see how their school compares with others. They also should use school-provided reports about their own child to develop, with the school, a plan to get their child up to the standard.

What if my child's school is labeled as *needing improvement*?

Individual schools are labeled by the state as needing improvement if, for two years in a row, they fail to make progress according to goals set by the state. The state is required to make public a list of needing improvement schools each year.

Parents of students in needing improvement schools are given specific rights under the law, according to how many years the school has been on the list.

I understand my child may be entitled to *supplemental educational services*.

What does that mean?

In this case it means free tutoring. It is a right provided to eligible students who attend a school labeled needing improvement for two consecutive years. The tutoring usually is offered outside the regular school day and is provided by qualified businesses and organizations. The goal of the tutoring is to help students reach the abilities expected at their grade level. Districts are required to inform parents if their child is eligible to receive tutoring and to negotiate a contract for the parents, once the parents select a provider.

What is a Title I school?

What does it mean to be Title I eligible? Title I is the federal program that provides funding to schools with a high number of children from low-income families. Most (but not all) needing improvement schools are Title I schools. Beyond knowing if your child is in a Title I

school identified as needing improvement, you will want to know if your child is Title I eligible (does he/she receive free or reduced-price lunch?). Regardless, you are eligible for the transfer option (see next page). You are only eligible for supplemental services if you are Title I eligible.

Actions Parents Can Take

What are my rights under federal law?

The federal law called *No Child Left Behind* guarantees parents the right to:

- At least one report a year on the individual academic progress of your child and the academic progress of your child's school, as well as other schools in the district and state;



- Involvement in school-improvement efforts. Each needing improvement school must have a written policy to involve parents;
- Transfer your child to a higher performing school if your child is in a school identified as needing improvement; and
- Free tutoring services if your child is in a school that is on the list for two consecutive years.

What if my child's school district fails to meet its obligations?

Take action and be persistent. Work your way up the chain of command until your concerns and questions are addressed. Start with your child's teacher, then the principal, and then, if necessary, contact the school district and the school board. **Parent Power Works** and your local community partner are always available to serve as your advocate and ally.

How will I know if my child's school needs improvement?

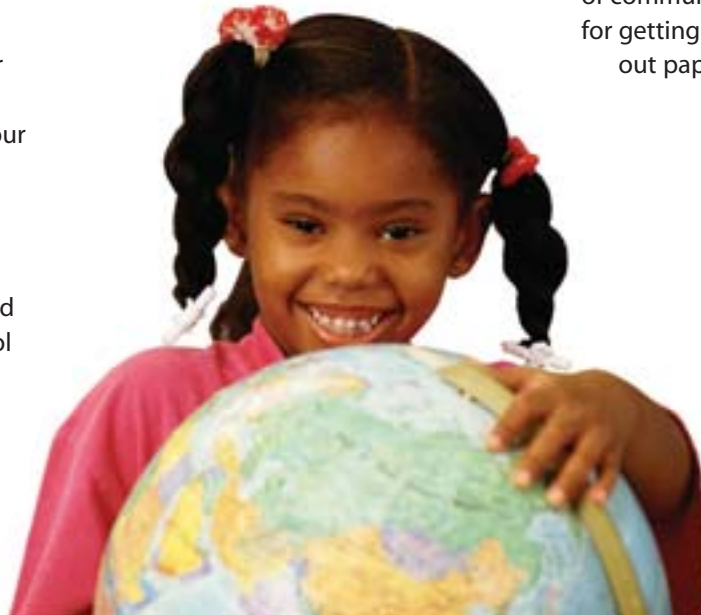
During the summer you should receive a letter from the school district informing you if your child's school is on the list of those needing improvement.

What should I do if my child's school is on the list of those needing improvement?

- Find out from your child's school how many years it has been on the needing improvement list and what rights you have as a result.
- Request from your child's school a list of schools your child can attend under the transfer program. The transfer option enables you to send your child to another higher performing school within the district. This option is available starting in

the first year of needing improvement.

- If you transfer your child to another school, request that the district provide transportation. By law, districts must transport children free of charge to the higher performing school.
- Obtain a list of tutors and get background information on them from www.BeThePower.org, your community partner and your child's school. Work with your child's school and teacher to select an appropriate tutor. This tutoring option is available starting in the second year of needing improvement.
- When needed, seek assistance from **Parent Power Works'** network of community partners for getting and filling out paperwork.



Give us a call at 1-888-275-7795



How can I stay informed about what is happening in my child's school?

- Watch for the school information that must be sent to your home. Once you receive it, make sure you understand it and discuss it with your child's principal, teachers and other parents.
- Visit the school as often as you can, either as a volunteer or to observe classes.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and other meetings held by the school.

Who can I turn to for help?

Community groups, local businesses, schools and other agencies have joined with **Parent Power Works** to create a local network of support for parents. A list of groups operating in your area is available at www.BeThePower.org or by calling **Parent Power Works** at 1-888-ASK-PPWK (1-888-275-7795).

How can I help other parents?

Become a leader by sharing what you've learned with other parents. There is strength and power in numbers. Your involvement and leadership can make a difference at your child's school and in the community.

Information is power. Keep this brochure handy. Help is at your fingertips.

Parent Power Works is a federally funded project of StandardsWork, Inc., a national nonprofit education organization. **Parent Power Works** supports parents in Washington, D.C., and Maryland by providing tools, training and resources to help them make good education decisions for their children. **Parent Power Works** lays the groundwork for parents, the school system and local organizations to join together in working for a better standard of education.

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