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School and District Report Cards

Questions Frequently Asked by Parents

About NCLB Report Cards

Q: *Why am I receiving this report card?*


A: The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires states and school districts to produce and disseminate annual report cards. These report cards include information on student assessment, accountability, and teacher quality; the report cards may also include other information. These report cards provide parents and other members of the public a snapshot of student performance and teacher qualifications in their local schools.

Q: *Last spring we received a report card similar to this one. Is this report card different?*

A: Districts are required to prepare and disseminate NCLB report cards each year. This year's report card provides updated test scores, accountability information, and teacher data. This year you may also notice some changes to the format and style of the report card.

Q: *Where can I get more information about NCLB Report Cards?*

A: Parents seeking more information on NCLB Report Cards are urged contact their school's principal, consult the U.S.

Department of Education's NCLB Parent Guide at www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/nclbguide/parentsguide.pdf,  or view information available on the Massachusetts Department of Education's website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/nclb/reportcard/>.

About Teacher Quality Data

Q: *The section on teacher qualifications contains percentages for "certified" teachers and "highly qualified teachers. What is the difference?*

A: Being certified to teach, and being "highly qualified" to teach are two different standards used to describe the background and preparation of teachers working in the district. Certification addresses whether or not a teacher has met Massachusetts' requirements to hold a teaching license. "Highly qualified" asks whether or not a teacher possesses a Massachusetts license and has demonstrated subject matter competency in the core subject he/she teaches. For more information about teacher quality in Massachusetts, please visit the website for Title II-A: Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals, at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/nclb/hq>.

Q: *How can I learn whether or not my child's teachers are highly qualified?*

A: Because the NCLB Report Card only provides summary information about teacher quality, parents seeking the qualifications of individual teachers are encouraged to ask their District Superintendent to provide the following information: (1) what degrees the teacher has earned (2) what certifications he/she holds, and (3) whether or not he/she has met the content requirements required for teachers who teach in the core subject areas. All teachers hired after January 8, 2002 must be highly qualified prior to starting work. All teachers who have been working in your school before January 8, 2002, must be highly qualified by June 30, 2006.

Q: *What can I do if my child's teacher is not highly qualified?*

A: NCLB requires that all teachers who teach in a core subject area be "highly qualified by June 30, 2006. Until then, your child's teacher may be in the process of becoming highly qualified as defined by the law, even if they have been successfully teaching for years. Each school must have a plan in place to ensure that its faculty is highly qualified by 2006. You are encouraged to contact your local school or district administrator to find out what the district is doing to meet these requirements.

About Accountability Data

Q: *What does it mean if my school has been "identified for improvement"?*

A: In accordance with the NCLB legislation, all public schools in the United States are required to ensure that all students are proficient in reading and mathematics by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations are issued yearly to monitor the interim progress of all students toward attainment of those performance goals. School and district AYP determinations are based on the performance of students in the aggregate and for student sub-groups for both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Schools identified for improvement are those that have not made AYP for two or three years in a row in either mathematics or reading for students in the aggregate or for a student subgroup.

Q: *Is "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) only based on academic performance?*

A: No. In addition to meeting academic expectations in reading and mathematics, schools and districts must also meet two other

requirements each year if they are to make AYP. At least 95% of all students must participate in MCAS tests each year; as such, low rates of test participation can result in a school or district not making AYP. Schools and districts can also be designated as not making AYP if their students' attendance rates are less than 92%, or if too few high school students receive a Competency Determination.

Q: *What can I do if my school has been "identified for improvement"?*

A: If a school receiving federal Title I funds has not made AYP for two consecutive years, parents have a right to transfer their child to another school in the district that is making adequate yearly progress. Parents who want to exercise the right of "choice" should contact their school officials to learn what they need to do to transfer their child to a new school. Schools that have not made adequately yearly progress (AYP) for three years in a row--in addition to offering parents the right to choose a new school--must also offer parents a chance to access "supplemental educational services for their child. Supplemental services - such as tutoring - are intended to provide students extra help in mastering the basics and catching up. Extra help can be offered after school, on weekends, or during school vacations. Parents seeking these extra services should again contact their school officials to find out what programs are available.

Q: *What does it mean if my school is in "corrective action"?*

A: A school identified for "corrective action" is one that has not made AYP for four or five years, for any of the reasons discussed above. A school in corrective action must take additional measures, beyond school choice and supplemental services, to break the cycle of failure and make adequate yearly progress. These measures may include changes in a school's curriculum, scheduling, or student policies. They may also involve reorganizing the leadership of the school by hiring a new principal or other key personnel. Parents whose school is designated as being in corrective action are urged to inquire about what steps the district is taking to improve conditions in the school. Districts with a school in corrective action receiving federal Title I funds must continue to offer the public school choice and supplemental educational services provisions, respectively.

Q: *What does it mean if my school is identified for "restructuring"?*

A: A school identified for "restructuring" is one that has not made AYP for six years, for any of the reasons discussed above. In the 2004-5 school year, schools in the Commonwealth may only be in the first year of restructuring, which is considered a planning year. In addition to offering the school choice and supplemental services provisions described above, districts must plan for fundamental changes in the identified schools' governance. Parents whose school is designated as being in restructuring are urged to inquire what steps the district is taking to improve conditions in the school.

Q: *Where can I find more information about student assessment results for my school or district?*

A: Detailed student assessment data for all public schools and districts in the Commonwealth are available through the Department of Education's School and District Profiles website at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu>. Additional information about the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is available from the Department of Education's MCAS website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>.

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