



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:

Tom Rosenthal
Rich Vespucci
609-292-1126

For Release: June 3, 2002

Department of Education Sends Preliminary Guidance to Schools on Implementing New Federal Law

The New Jersey Department of Education has sent an information packet to school districts that provides guidance to educators on their responsibilities under the new federal education law, the No Child Left Behind Act.

The packet includes information to help district officials establish a process to allow students enrolled in low-performing schools to transfer to another public school in the same school district under certain circumstances.

The information packet also contains suggestions on how school district officials can inform parents of their schools' status and the choice options for their children, beginning with the 2002-03 school year.

The intradistrict choice options include open enrollment, which is considered under the law to be the optimum choice design, limited choice opportunities based on limited space availability, and a lack of capacity, which may prevent some school districts from offering choice. New Jersey also offers interdistrict choice options in some communities. This affords other choice options in districts that cannot offer intradistrict choice. (For details, see the attachment, [Intradistrict Choice Options](#).)

"New Jersey is joining the other states in implementing the No Child Left Behind Act," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "This new law will have a significant impact on all schools that receive Title I funds and especially on low-performing schools. It also will in some cases create more flexibility for students to attend another school.

"It is vitally important that local educators have a clear understanding of their new responsibilities and that students and their parents have reasonable expectations from their schools," Commissioner Librera continued. "We stand ready to assist schools as they prepare to implement new Title I procedures in the coming school year."

The information packet is intended to serve as preliminary guidance to schools until final guidance is received from the United States Department of Education. In addition, general training sessions for educators on the No Child Left Behind Act will be held regionally from June 10-14 and a two-day summer institute on school improvement will be held for local school leaders in August.

Earlier this month, the Department of Education fulfilled part of its responsibilities under the new federal law by identifying schools in need of improvement, based on student performance on state tests given to fourth and eighth grade students.

Schools identified in need of improvement must develop an improvement plan to show what actions they will take to improve teaching and learning. They must also provide professional development to strengthen the skills of their staffs.

Each district identified as in need of improvement must also describe how it will offer choice and notify parents of the opportunity to transfer their children to another school within the district that is not identified for improvement.

To determine the level of student performance in the schools, the Department of Education reviewed test results over a three-year period (1998-99, 1999-00, 2000-01). Schools were placed into categories based on the progress made. High schools were not included in the initial list of schools identified because the state's new test for high school students (High School Proficiency Assessment) was given for the first time in 2001-02.

All Title I schools have been classified into one of six categories:

Categories V and VI - Schools in this category have attained state standards one or more years. 1,208 schools, or 63.02 percent, were identified in this category.

Category IV - These schools have made adequate yearly progress and are progressing toward meeting the state standards. 233 schools, or 12.15 percent, were identified in this category.

Category III - These schools have not met all progress standards, but have made significant progress toward meeting full standards. These schools should continue to monitor their progress. 17 schools, or .089 percent, were identified in this category.

Category II - These schools have made some progress but require close monitoring to assure that gains continue. 159 schools, or 8.29 percent, were identified in this category.

Category I - These schools have been identified as schools in need of improvement, a designation that must be reported to the federal Department of Education. 300 schools, or 15.65 percent, were identified in this category.

[A more detailed description of the six performance categories is attached](#), as is a [list of frequently asked questions](#). For a complete list of Title I schools and their categories, visit the department's Web site:

www.state.nj.us/njded/data/title1/