



Understanding Vermont's System for Improving Schools

How is federal law trying to make Vermont's schools better?

In January 2002, President Bush signed a law called the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), intended to improve student results in reading and math. Specifically, the law requires that 100% of students be "proficient" – that is, they must have a high level of skill - in reading and math by 2013-14. As a result of NCLB, all states, including Vermont, were required to develop systems to track their schools' progress toward meeting that proficiency goal. Vermont already had a system which was changed to meet NCLB requirements.

How are reading, math and science proficiency measured in Vermont?

Vermont defines proficient as meeting our state standards, which describe what children should know and be able to do by the end of each grade (2-7) or grade span (for example K – 4 or 5 – 8).

How does the Vermont Department of Education know how well Vermont's schools and students are doing in reaching these math and reading goals?

Each year, the Vermont Department of Education looks at several factors to see if schools are making sufficient progress, or "adequate yearly progress" (AYP), toward the proficiency goal set by NCLB. These include:

1. Student scores on state math and reading tests (NECAP, the New England Common Assessment Program);
2. The percent of students that participate in state tests; and
3. The percent of students that graduate from high school.

What happens if a school doesn't make adequate progress in helping students be skilled in math and reading?

If schools don't make Adequate Yearly Progress ("AYP") for two years in a row, they are considered "schools in need of improvement". These schools work with the Vermont Department of Education to develop an improvement plan and must carry out certain actions required by the Commissioner of Education. These actions address the reasons they did not make AYP. They also receive assistance from the Department of Education to help them reach the objectives outlined in their improvement plans.

What is a Title 1 school? Do they have special rules?

Title I schools receive specific federal funding to help their children get better results in school. To receive this money, schools must have a certain number or percentage of students living at a certain level of poverty (usually based on eligibility for free and reduced lunch). Local districts or supervisory unions (SU) must follow a set of rules to determine which schools receive Title I funds. Title I schools that do not make AYP have some additional requirements with regard to school choice and supplemental educational services.

When is school choice an option?

If a Title 1 school hasn't made AYP for two years in a row, and is considered "in need of improvement", then NCLB allows parents of all students in that school to choose a different public school for their child. However, school choice is only possible if the child's school district has another public school with the same grade span as the school that is not making AYP. In Vermont, this is the case only in Bennington, Brattleboro, Hartford, Springfield, and in Burlington at the elementary and middle school levels. School choice, where possible, is offered to *all students* in Title I schools; there is no family income requirement.

When are supplemental educational services an option?

If a Title I school does not make AYP for three years in a row, schools are required to provide extra help, such as tutoring, in core subjects like reading and math. This extra help is referred to as "supplemental educational services" or SES. These supplemental services are only given to students who qualify for the free/reduced price lunch program. They may be provided by private programs and centers, individual tutors, or other schools and they must be offered to students outside of the regular school day. This additional assistance is provided to students free of charge but the school does not have to provide transportation to tutoring services.

How do I find out if my school must offer school choice or supplemental services?

Title I schools are required to inform parents of the opportunity for either choice or SES if their student's school has either of these requirements. The complete list of providers and the names of all schools in the state required to offer SES are also posted on the Vermont Department of Education website at:

http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/laws/nclba/supp_providers_061407.pdf

How can I find out more information?

For more information about Vermont's educational system or how you can be involved with your child's school, call the PIRC Vermont toll free Help Line at 1-800-639-7170. You will be able to speak personally and confidentially to a family consultant.



PIRC Vermont (Parent Information and Resource Center)
600 Blair Park Road, Suite 301
Williston, VT 05495

Visit us on the web at
www.pircvermont.org

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