BUILDING ON RESULTS

Archived Information

Reform, Renewal, and Results

"No parent should ever feel like their child is trapped in an underperforming school."
– U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

Before the *No Child Left Behind Act* was passed, parents were often relegated to the educational sidelines. If their child's school repeatedly underperformed, they were given few alternatives. NCLB has empowered these families with new choices and information, including free tutoring and afterschool instruction and the opportunity to enroll their child in a better-performing public school, including a public charter school. About 300,000 students have taken advantage of these options. Together, these policies not only benefit children, they send a message of competition to troubled public schools: reform or risk losing your students.

Building On Results: Strengthening the *No Child Left Behind Act* will help more parents make appropriate choices for their children. The law will provide new choices through expanded Opportunity Scholarships and a private school option for students in underperforming schools. Supplemental Educational Services (SES) will be offered one year earlier. And charter schools will be supported with financial incentives and streamlined rules.

- Promise Scholarships—Public schools that go into restructuring status will be required to offer private school choice, intensive tutoring, or inter-district public school choice through Promise Scholarships to low-income students in grades 3-12. Federal funds will follow the child to his or her new school, to be supplemented by a federal scholarship of $2,500.

- Opportunity Scholarships—This new program will support local efforts to expand public and private school choice options within a set geographic area. Modeled after the Washington, D.C. choice program that the federal government has funded since 2004, it would enable students to attend a private school through a locally designed scholarship program. Families could also seek additional tutoring for their children.

- Charter Schools—The federal charter school program will support all viable charter applications that improve academic outcomes. In addition, local decisions to convert schools identified for restructuring into charter schools will be allowed, even if the total number of charter schools would then surpass a state's charter cap.

- Supplemental Educational Services (SES)—Tutoring and after-school instruction will be offered to all low-income students who attend a school in improvement status from the first year forward, one year earlier than before. In addition, districts will be asked to spend all relevant federal funds or risk their forfeiture, eliminating the disincentive to support SES and choice programs.

- School Improvement Fund—Funds will be targeted to ensure improvement in some of the nation's most challenging schools. School Improvement Grants will support implementation of the schools' improvement plans and will assist states' efforts to closely monitor and review those plans while providing technical assistance to turn around low-performing schools.

- Prioritized Support for Schools—States will be able to focus more federal resources, interventions, and technical assistance on schools with the greatest needs, such as those identified for improvement or corrective action.

- Staffing Freedom at the Most Troubled Schools— Schools that are required to be restructured will be able to remove limitations on teacher transfers from their collective bargaining agreements, similar to contract revisions permitted under bankruptcy law, so that the school leadership is able to put the most effective staff in place.

- Flexibility—States will be able to prioritize their school improvement activities based on the specific needs and successes of the school. To help states and districts tailor programs for their needs, 100 percent of specified federal funds may be moved among programs.