

Parents' Right to Know

Did You know...

- That a school must send a notice to parents whose children have been assigned a teacher of a core subject who does not meet the "highly qualified" teacher definition established by the state
- That a school must notify parents if their child's teacher has been taught by a teacher, for four or more consecutive week, who does not meet the "high qualified" standards set by the state.

At the beginning of every school year, Title I school districts must tell parents they have a right to request the following information about the professional qualifications of their children's teachers.

Parents have the right to know:

- Whether the teacher has met state qualifications and has a license for the grade level and the subject area he or she teaches
- Whether the teacher has an emergency or provisional license
- What degrees the teacher holds and the field of discipline of his or her certification or degree
- Whether the child is being taught by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications

In addition, school districts must notify parents if their child has been assigned, or has been taught by—for four or more consecutive weeks—a teacher who is not highly qualified.

This information must be provided to parents:

- In a uniform format
- "To the extent practicable," provide in a language that parents can understand, and
- In a timely manner

Merely posting this information on the school's Internet does not suffice. Direct communication with parents who request the information is required.

Beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, the US Secretary of Education must issue a public report—based on information provided by school districts and states—on the annual progress of every state, every school district, and every Title I school in meeting state objectives for assuring that that every child have a qualified teacher by the school year 2005–2006. (See Teacher Quality Fact Sheet) Districts may include this information in the annual student report card required by NCLB. Community members and parents can use this information to determine how their school and district compares with others in the state and nationally.

Parents' Right to Know

Using Data Effectively:

Action Opportunities for Community and Parent Leaders

The "Parents Right to Know" data should NOT be used against teachers, or draw conclusions about the competency of a school's teaching staff. The community, parents and educators, however, should use the data as a means to working together in upgrading teaching skills and improving instruction. The competence of the teacher is one of the most critical elements in school change and improvement.

Action Items

Below are some action tips to help your state, school and school district:

- Monitor SEA deadlines and release of annual state teacher quality reports. Make sure the SEA disseminates the reports widely in communities and school districts.
- Work with the SEA and LEA to ensure that state and local teacher data and information are in a format and a language parents understand. Test the format and language with focus groups and at town meetings to ensure that parents find the information understandable and useful. Give the SEA suggestions for improvement.
- Assist parents and parent organizations in drafting letters to the LEA and to schools requesting teacher quality information.
- Coordinate a school or district teacher quality task force that includes other organizations, policymakers, elected officials, parents and business leaders to analyze the report and recommend action.
- Assist the LEA in disseminating the report to the media, at town meetings, schools, business and community organizations.
- Work with parents and school staff to ensure the SEA, LEA and school conduct meetings with parents and staff to explain the implications of the teacher quality information.
- Research what other communities have done about teacher quality issues such as recruitment, compensation and retention.
- Use data to create community demand for recruiting more qualified teachers, and to involve the public in recommending and pursuing strategies that will increase the number of qualified teachers.
- Use the report to analyze whether the district is meeting its obligation under Section 1112 to ensure that low-income and minority students are being taught by qualified teachers at rates equal to the number of qualified teachers in wealthier districts. In other words, make sure that qualified teachers are evenly distributed to ALL schools in the district.
- Recommend strategies to recognize and reward qualified teachers and to retain good teachers and principals.

Parents' Right to Know

- Conduct information campaigns on the importance of qualified teachers, what the community must do to attract more qualified teachers, and how to ensure that low-performing schools have qualified staff.
- Parent and community leaders should assist parents in analyzing teacher quality information. Use the information to recognize qualified teachers and develop strategies to increase the number of qualified teachers.

Resources

Title II Technical Assistance, US Department of Education

<http://title2.org/>

Education Trust

<http://www.edtrust.org/>

National Center on Educational Outcomes

<http://education.umn.edu/nceo/projects/mnap.html>

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

<http://www.ncpie.org/>

National PTA

<http://www.pta.org/>

Parent Leadership Associates

<http://www.plassociates.org/>

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

<http://www.prichardcommittee.org/>

Public School Forum on North Carolina

<http://www.ncforum.org/index.htm>

Reconnecting Communities and Schools

<http://www.theharwoodinstitute.org/>

Study Circles

<http://www.studycircles.org/>

Wrightslaw

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/nclb.index.htm>