

## **Public School Choice Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) For School Districts**

**Q1. When must Public School Choice options be provided to parents?**

**A1.** Section 1116 of the No Child Left Behind Act requires Title I schools identified for school improvement to offer Public School Choice to parents at the beginning of the school year immediately following the identification. (i.e. 2005 PSSA results were utilized to identify schools for school improvement in August of 2005. School improvement schools must offer school choice at the beginning of the 2005-06 school year.) Non-Title I schools in school improvement, however, will **NOT** be required to offer public school choice in the 2005-06 school year. No Child Left Behind does **NOT** require non-Title I schools to notify parents of the school status, but we encourage districts to communicate the AYP status of all schools in the district after the state releases its Academic Achievement Report in August of 2005.

**Q2. Must Public School Choice be offered to every student in the identified school?**

**A2.** Yes. Every student attending a public Title I school that has been identified for school improvement must be offered the choice to transfer to another public school within the district that has not been identified for improvement. Non-Title I schools in school improvement, however, will **NOT** be required to offer public school choice in the 2005-06 school year.

**Q3. Must a school district that has not met AYP offer parents the choice to transfer their children to schools in other school districts?**

**A3.** No. Title I schools that are identified for school improvement are required to offer parents of children attending the school the option to transfer to any other public school ***within the school district*** that is NOT identified for school improvement. School districts are not required to offer public school choice options outside of the district, but are encouraged, to the extent practicable, to enter into cooperative agreements with neighboring school districts to provide choice options for parents.

**Q4. Who is responsible for paying for the transportation costs associated with Public School Choice?**

**A4.** The school district must cover transportation costs. A school district required to offer Public School Choice must set aside funds in an amount equal to 5 to 20% of its Title I allocation to provide school choice related transportation costs. The funds do not have to be taken directly from Title I, but the district's Title I allocation must be used to calculate the set aside requirement. (i.e. District Title I Allocation \$500,000 X 5% = \$25,000 minimum set aside)

**Q5. If my schools are filled to capacity, how can I accommodate student transfers required under NCLB?**

**A5.** The NCLB Act specifically states that school districts cannot use “lack of capacity” to eliminate choice options for parents. School districts must provide parents with options. Solutions for “lack of capacity” are not spelled out in the legislation or guidance and must be decided upon locally.

**Q6. Do I offer Public School Choice only to Title I students?**

**A6.** No. All children who attend a Title I school identified for school improvement must be offered Public School Choice. If not all choice requests can be honored, the school district must prioritize on the basis of income and academic achievement.

**Q7. May students who are entitled to School Choice transfer to nonpublic schools at the district's expense ?**

**A7.** No. Public School Choice only applies to public schools. School districts cannot offer nonpublic schools as a choice.

**Q8. Can I limit choice options for parents?**

**A8.** You must offer parents more than one option for transfer if more than one option exists within the district, but you may limit the choices for various reasons. For example, if six schools within a district can accept transferred students from two identified buildings, a district may allow the parents from one school to choose from three of the six buildings that are geographically closer and provide the remaining three buildings as an option for the other identified building.

**Q9. Does Title I funding follow Title I students that transfer into new schools?**

**A9.** Title I funds are generally distributed to Title I buildings within a school district based on the attendance area data of a building. If a child transfers into a new building, but resides in the original building's attendance area, the funds remain in the original school. If a school district distributes Title I funds to Title I buildings using enrollment data, after all transfers take place, the distribution of funds must be adjusted to account for all transfers.

If a Title I student transfers into a non-Title I building, the funds do not follow the child.

**Q10. Must a school district that has a Magnet School offer students the opportunity to transfer to that school?**

**A10.** Yes, however, school districts do not have to change or lower the entrance requirements. A child transferring into a magnet school would have to meet the same requirements for entrance as all other students.

**Q11. If a building exits school improvement, can the school district require that all previously transferred students return to the school?**

**A11.** No. Children who transfer to other schools as a result of the Public School Choice option may attend the new school until they complete the last grade offered in the building. However, the district is not required to pay for the transportation costs for those children after the school exits school improvement.