



# **Choice Letters: Informing Parents about Public School Choice**

Unit of Federal Program Administration  
Colorado Department of Education  
2012  
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# Public School Choice Regulations before NCLB Waiver

- Title I schools on any level of School Improvement (Year 1 and beyond) had to send a letter offering public school choice to all current and incoming students.
- Schools could not offer Supplemental Educational Services (SES) until they were on School Improvement Year 2.
- School Improvement status was determined by how the school had fared in meeting its AYP targets, in the past as well as for the most recent testing results.

# Public School Choice Regulations before NCLB Waiver

At this point in the school year, it was known that some Title I schools definitely would have to offer public school choice the following year.

Schools already on Improvement that had not made AYP the prior year would remain on Improvement (assuming they continued to take Title I funds) because they needed to make AYP two years in a row to come off Improvement.

## Public School Choice Regulations before NCLB Waiver

Other Title I schools had the “potential” to go on Improvement, or come off, depending on whether the school made its current AYP targets.

If the school had been on Improvement but made AYP last year, it would come off Improvement if it made AYP again this year.

If the school had not made AYP last year and did not make AYP again this year, it would go on Improvement.

# Public School Choice Regulations before NCLB Waiver

Districts did not know which schools would have to offer choice or which ones could be “choice schools” until immediately before the school year began when AYP was released. Letters had to be drafted “just in case” and worst-case-scenario transportation plans made.

Letters had to be sent to parents even if no choice school was available.

CDE had to apply to the U.S. Dept. of Ed. for waivers for districts that had less than 2 weeks between AYP release and the start of school.

# Public School Choice Regulations after NCLB Waiver

- Only Title I schools on *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround* must send letters offering public school choice to all current and incoming students.
- Schools on *Improvement* or *Performance* plans can be choice schools

New school status categories are Performance (highest), Improvement, Priority Improvement and Turnaround (lowest).

# Public School Choice Regulations after NCLB Waiver

- Status is determined by the 2011 School Performance Frameworks (SPFs)—not TCAP 2012.
- Supplemental Educational Services (SES) must be offered to students who remain in *Priority Improvement* and *Turnaround* schools and test below proficient the same year that they are offered choice.

In late April, Superintendents received letters regarding any Title I schools that currently are on *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround* plans and, thus, will be on them in 2012-13 and must offer public school choice.

Letters included:

1. Information about when public school choice must be offered;
2. Regulations around informing community.



## Districts with Schools on *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround*

Must offer all students the option to transfer to another school, in the district, not on *Priority Improvement/Turnaround* or deemed persistently dangerous.

- If a district has two schools that are not *Priority Improvement/Turnaround*, then both schools, at a minimum, must be offered as choice options.
- Choice schools also can be new start-ups, as long as at least one pre-existing school that has academic data is offered.

## Districts with Schools on *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround*

- Must comply with rules around how they notify parents about the school choice option.
- Notification must be mailed to parents of all students enrolled in the school.
- Districts must shoulder transportation costs for such transfers.

- If school choice or transportation funds are limited, district must give first priority to the lowest achieving students from low-income families.
- Students who transfer must be allowed to attend that “choice school” until they complete the highest grade, even if the original school is no longer on *Priority Improvement/Turnaround*.

- If the original school has come off *Priority Improvement/Turnaround*, the district no longer has to pay for transportation.
- Letters to parents of current students as well as new enrollees can be mailed any time, but must be early enough that parents *receive* them at least 14 business days prior to the beginning of the 2012-13 school year.

- Letters must be translated into Spanish unless there are no Spanish households in the *Priority Improvement/Turnaround* school.

If the district has no “choice schools” to which students can transfer because:

- it has no other schools in same grade span; or
- all other schools in the grade span also are on *Priority Improvement/Turnaround*,

school choice notification letters do not have to be sent to parents.

The district must include improvement status in SES letters to parents of eligible children based on TCAP 2012, going out in August.

# Letter Requirements

The Parent Choice Notification Checklist details all requirements for the letters.

[http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp\\_psc\\_pcnc.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp_psc_pcnc.pdf)

1. Date and send the letter early enough that parents receive it at least 14 business days prior to the first day of school.
2. Identify whether school is on *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround*.
3. Explain why school is on *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround*. Specify content area(s), reading, writing, math or science, academic growth, grad rate.



4. Explain that parents may transfer child to another school that is not on *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround*.

For example: *[School] and [District] are committed to ensuring that all children reach proficient levels of achievement. But you also have the option to transfer your student to another school in our district that is not on Priority Improvement or Turnaround.*

Be careful not to imply any repercussions for transferring students.

5. Explain that the district will pay for/provide transportation based on at least one of the following options:


- From the home to the choice school or;
- From the school-on-improvement to the choice school.

Example: *If you want to transfer your student, [District] will provide bus transportation from [School] to one of the following choice schools:*

*[Choice School #1]*

*[Choice School #2]*

Watch your “tone.” Do not discourage parents, insinuate that funds are not available or set an unrealistic deadline.

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6. Explain that if the parent keeps their student at the Priority Improvement or Turnaround school and if the student is not yet academically proficient (e.g., TCAP, CBLA assessment), the student may be eligible for free tutoring in the 2012-2013 school year.

7. Direct Parents to SchoolView to that they can compare the *Priority Improvement / Turnaround* schools to choice schools (if available) on achievement and growth data as reported on 1- and 3-year School Performance Frameworks (SPFs).

Offer to provide hard copies of SPFs if they do not have access to the CDE website or prefer not to access it that way.

## 8. Explain what school is doing to increase student achievement.

Example: *Before you transfer your student, consider our efforts to improve students' academic success:*

- Title I and Literacy Lab teachers to provide additional instruction to 100+ students daily.*
- Instructional Math coaching for K-5 teachers.*
- Efforts and initiatives to improve graduation rates.*
- Data review to determine what students do well and need to do better so we can focus instruction.*

9. Explain what the district and state are doing to help increase student achievement.

Example: *[District] provides the following to support improved student achievement:*

- *Implementation of the Focused Approach to School Improvement Grant which includes a math intervention program and instruction model for teachers.*
- *Professional Development for teachers to expand their knowledge of reading instructional strategies.*

- *Training in data analysis to help teachers tailor classroom instruction to be more responsive to students' academic needs.*
- *Efforts and initiatives to improve graduation rates.*
- *Alignment with state standards to help our school become more data driven (using actual student achievement data to help teachers make decisions about what to teach and how).*

10. Recommend ways parents can help address the academic issues that led to school going on Priority Improvement or Turnaround.

Example:

*How can you help us address our academic challenges?*

*Parents can assist with schoolwork, attend parent conferences, read monthly newsletters and make sure children attend school daily.*

*Also, we invite you to attend and participate in the following opportunities that will be publicized in monthly newsletters:*

- Attend monthly accountability meetings to address to help with our [Priority Improvement or Turnaround] plans.*



- *Literacy Night to address reading improvement.*
- *Board of Education study committees*
- *PTA meetings and Parent Coffees sponsored by Title I teachers.*
- *Become a Parent Volunteer.*
- *Efforts and initiatives to improve graduation rates.*
- *Discuss ways you can help in the classroom and at home with your child's teacher.*

11. Provide a Spanish translation of the letter and attachments (unless there are no Spanish households).

Keep file copies of these letters for possible CDE monitoring and/or U.S. Department of Education audits.

# How to access School Performance Frameworks (SPFs)

Go to SchoolView <http://www.schoolview.org/>

Click on “School Performance” button.

The screenshot shows the SchoolView website interface. At the top left is the CDE logo with the tagline 'Improving Academic Achievement'. To its right is the 'SCHOOLview™' logo. Below these are navigation tabs: 'CDE Home', 'SchoolVIEW', 'For Educators', 'For Administrators', and 'For Parents & Students'. A banner below the tabs reads 'Changing Conversations™ about school performance and educational resources across Colorado'. Below the banner are four main sections, each with a circular icon and a brief description:

- colorado growth model**: Icon shows a scatter plot of orange dots. Description: **Compare** the performance of Colorado schools and districts and gauge their progress.
- school performance**: Icon shows a green line graph with an upward arrow. This icon is circled in red, and a black arrow points to it from below. Description: **Access** performance data for all schools and districts across the state.
- learning center**: Icon shows a magnifying glass over the text 'SCHOOLView'. Description: **Discover** SchoolView features and explore video and other resources.
- community connections**: Icon shows a computer monitor with a blue arrow pointing to it. Description: **Connect** with others about school improvement.

SchoolVIEW Home

Colorado Growth Model

School Performance

Learning Center

Community Connections



## State, District and School Performance

### What's New

- ["Districts Accredited With Distinction" And "Centers of Excellence" Schools Celebrated](#)
- State releases school, district performance ratings at recent meeting
- CDE Analysis Shows Achievement Data An Indicator of College Readiness From As Early as Sixth-Grade

### The SchoolView Data Center

The SchoolVIEW Data Center gives you information about Colorado's public education system at the state, district and school levels. It provides easy access to data on federal and state accountability results, academic performance, and student and school demographics.

 [SchoolVIEW Data Center](#)

[Data Center FAQs](#)

### Performance Framework Reports and Improvement Plans

The district and school performance frameworks provide a snapshot of the district or school's level of attainment on academic achievement, growth, growth gaps and postsecondary readiness.

**Please Note:** The state Performance Framework reports listed below are available for the two latest years of framework results. The 2010-11 reports are highlighted in green, and are the latest results released in December 2011. The 2010-11 reports reflect results for the academic years 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11. The 2009-10 reports are listed below the 2010-11 reports, and were released in December 2010. The 2009-10 reports reflect results for the academic years 2007-8, 2008-9, and 2009-10.

Improvement plans provide information on the district or school's data trends, root causes and targets, and identify strategies and resources the district or school will use to improve student academic outcomes.

**Click on a district or school name to view its performance framework reports and improvement plans:**

Instruct parents to click on your district

#### District:

1040 - Academy 20  
0020 - Adams 12 Five Star Schools  
0030 - Adams County 14  
0180 - Adams-Arapahoe 28J  
0960 - Agate 300  
1620 - Aguilar Reorganized 6  
3030 - Akron R-1  
0100 - Alamosa RE-11J  
0220 - Archuleta County 50 JT  
3040 - Arickaree R-2  
1450 - Arriba-Flagler C-20

#### School:

• 0017 - Academy Endeavour Elementary School  
• 0019 - Academy International Elementary School  
• 0110 - Academy Online High School  
• 0076 - Air Academy High School  
• 0249 - Antelope Trails Elementary School  
• 0209 - Aspen Valley High School  
• 0074 - Challenger Middle School

#### Reports:

1040 - Academy 20  
District Report  
[2011 - 1 Year DPF Report](#)  
[2011 - 3 Year DPF Report](#)  
[2010 - 1 Year DPF Report](#)  
[2010 - 3 Year DPF Report](#)  
Improvement Plan  
School Report  
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Click on any school(s)

Click on a district or school name to view its performance framework reports and improvement plans:

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District:	School:	Reports:
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Click on *1-year* or *3-year* report

# Resources

## Public School Choice Information

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/imp/psc.asp>

- Parent Choice Notification Checklist:  
[http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp\\_psc\\_pcnc.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp_psc_pcnc.pdf)
- Sample letter:  
[http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp\\_psc\\_exschs.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp_psc_exschs.pdf)
- Sample template:  
[http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp\\_psc\\_exshstemplate.doc](http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/dl/imp_psc_exshstemplate.doc)

# Questions?

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