

Sample Parent/Guardian Notification – Discontinuation of NCLB Public School Choice and/or Supplemental Educational Services (SES)

During the 2011-12 school year, Massachusetts sought and received flexibility from certain No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. Massachusetts' flexibility request had broad support from diverse stakeholders, and is intended to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. Under our approved NCLB/ESEA flexibility request, beginning with the start of the 2012-13 school year districts will no longer be required by federal law to offer supplemental educational services (SES) or NCLB public school choice. If a district chooses to discontinue SES and/or NCLB school choice, the district must provide parents with information to explain why SES and transportation for NCLB school choice¹ will no longer be offered, explain the interventions, incentives, and supports that will replace those options, and provide other relevant details regarding the termination of the existing services. This information should be provided as early as feasible so that parents may plan accordingly, and should be provided in a language and format that is understandable to parents. The sample letter below was developed in response to requests by districts for a template that can be adapted to fit local context and need.

(District or School Letterhead)

(Date)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

On February 10, 2012, Massachusetts received a waiver of certain No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. The purpose of this letter is to describe the educational opportunities made possible by the waiver, and to help you understand what the waiver will mean for you and your child.

NCLB required Massachusetts to measure the progress schools are making toward the goal of 100 percent proficiency in reading and math by the year 2014. Schools that did not make sufficient progress for two or more consecutive years were “identified for improvement.” Under NCLB, schools receiving federal Title I funds that did not make sufficient progress had to offer parents the opportunity to transfer their child to another school in the district that was not identified for improvement and/or offer tutoring, called supplemental educational services (SES) to children from low income families.

When NCLB was passed in 2002, it provided families useful information about the performance of their children's schools. However, NCLB's rising targets have led to an increasing number of schools deemed failing under the law: this year, approximately 80 percent of all Massachusetts schools were identified as

¹ NOTE: Although districts will no longer be obligated by federal law to provide transportation for NCLB school choice, any student who has transferred into a school through NCLB school choice must be allowed to remain in that school through the highest grade served by the school. The district's obligations to fund transportation for such students reverts to state law and local transportation policies.

needing improvement. As a result, NCLB made it impossible for parents to distinguish mostly successful schools from schools that were struggling.

Massachusetts' approved NCLB waiver corrects many of the problems under NCLB. Instead of expecting all schools to reach 100 percent proficiency by the year 2014, the state will measure progress toward the goal of reducing proficiency gaps by half by 2017, a goal that is ambitious but more achievable than the NCLB goal. Districts and schools will be placed in one of five "accountability and assistance levels" designed to support schools where students are struggling the most. Finally, districts will have greater flexibility in using federal Title I funds to meet identified needs and will not be restricted to offering NCLB school choice and SES.

In order to take advantage of the flexibility offered by the waiver, I am writing to inform you that beginning in the 2012-13 school year, (*District Name*) will no longer offer NCLB school choice or SES. Instead, we will use federal funds to improve teaching and learning for our neediest students. (*Explain the interventions, incentives, and supports that will replace NCLB choice and SES. If these have not yet been identified, provide a timeline for when and how parents will be notified.*).

If your child is enrolled in SES, he or she is entitled to continue receiving these services until the end of the school year. (*Provide other relevant details regarding the termination of existing services.*)

If your child is enrolled in a school as a result of NCLB school choice, he or she is entitled to remain in that school through the highest grade served by the school. (*Provide details about transportation, including the district's policy regarding the younger siblings of students who transferred as a result of NCLB school choice; the distinction between NCLB school choice and other choice programs in the district; etc.*)

The waiver does not affect our continuing obligation to share with you information on the performance of your child's school; nor does it affect our commitment to involving all parents as full partners in the education of their children.

For more information on the waiver and what it will mean for your child, please contact (*Name, Title*) at (*Phone Number*) or visit us online at (*Website*).

For more information on how you can become involved in your child's school, please contact (*Name, Title*) at (*Phone Number*) or visit us online at (*Website*).

Sincerely,

(*Name, Title*)