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Public Law 107-110, Section 1116(b)(1)(E)

Illinois State Board of Education Guidance
Early Notification of Public School Choice

GUIDANCE FOR EARLY NOTIFICATION
OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

March 2011

This document is to assist school districts that choose to implement early notification for schools that cannot exit Federal status: School Improvement, Corrective Action, and Restructuring.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide school districts with information about the **early notification option for Public School Choice** and the review of the parent notification materials (Public School Choice letter and Request to Transfer form) by the Illinois State Board of Education.

This document contains the following items:

- Important General Advice on the early notification of Public School Choice and General Guidelines;
- Checklist for Early Notification for Public School Choice (Parent Letter);
- Suggested Contents for the Student Transfer Form; and
- Sample Public School Choice Letter for schools that cannot exit school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

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GENERAL ADVICE

- Public School Choice is required when a school is in Federal school improvement status.
- Read the United States Department of Education's *Public School Choice Non-Regulatory Guidance*, Section D. Notification of Parents (D-6 and D-7) with references to the *Compiled Federal Regulations*.
www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/schoolchoiceguid.pdf
www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2008-4/102908a.html
- Have your parent notification materials reviewed by ISBE before you send them out.

Although every attempt was made to include information that would assist school districts with the review of their Public School Choice parent notification materials, there may be specific questions that require more direct attention. To discuss these questions, contact Evelyn Deimel at 217-524-4832 or at edeimel@isbe.net.

GENERAL GUIDELINES
FOR EARLY NOTIFICATION FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

- A school district can offer public school choice early only to students in schools that cannot exit school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.
- A school district that offers public school choice early is not required to re-notify parents of the students about their option for choice or hold another enrollment period for those students after receiving school AYP determinations from ISBE.
- A school district, once it receives the Adequate Yearly Progress determinations, must notify the parents of the students that their child's school is still identified in Federal status. The notice to parents of these students should also reference the fact that parents were given the public school choice option earlier in the year. These documents must be reviewed and approved by ISBE before sending out. For more information, see http://www.isbe.net/grants/word/choice_guidance.doc
- A school district that offers public school choice early and receives enough transfer requests to use all available funds for choice-related transportation, must still offer public school choice to other eligible students through its "regular" notification process [*Section 1116(b)(1)(E)(i); 34 C.F.R. §200.44(a)*].
- A school district may not commit all of the funds it has available for choice-related transportation before it offers public school choice to all eligible students because doing so would violate the requirement that priority be given to "the lowest achieving children from low-income families" [*Section 1116(b)(1)(E)(ii)*]. Requiring a school district to reserve some choice-related funds ensures that students attending schools that are just entering school improvement status are not denied the opportunity to transfer because of early notifications.

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CHECKLIST FOR EARLY NOTIFICATION FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

A school district must notify parents of eligible students of the availability of public school choice sufficiently in advance of, but no later than 14 calendar days before, before the first day of the school year. However, a school district can offer public school choice early to students in schools that cannot exit school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

To assist school districts with the preparation of their letters, a sample Public School Choice letter for early notification is enclosed. Use this sample letter and the following check list to ensure that the School Choice letter to the parents contains all the essential elements required in the statute.

The School Choice letter should specify ...

- Whether the school has been identified for School Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring, and an explanation of what the identification means
- The reason(s) for the school being identified for school improvement
- The parents' options to **transfer** their child to another public school with **transportation provided** by the School district when required
- An explanation of the selection of students when funding is limited (priority will be given to the lowest-achieving students from low-income families)
- Clear instructions and sufficient timelines for submitting the request to transfer

If there is at least one school making Adequate Yearly Progress to which students can transfer, the following items must be included.

- Student Transfer Form (See suggested contents on the following page.)
- List of school(s) to which students can transfer, including information on academic achievement of these schools (may use AYP Report for 2008-2009 school year)

Reminder:

School districts that implement early notification must notify their schools once AYP status final (mid-summer). At that time, the letter informs the parents of the actual status of the school and reminds the parents that they have already been provided an option for transfer in the early notification letter. These letters must be approved by ISBE and sent out 14 days prior to the start of school.

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SUGGESTED CONTENTS FOR THE STUDENT TRANSFER FORMS

There is no specific form or required elements in the Public School Choice Student Transfer form other than there should be a list of the schools to which the student can transfer and the academic achievement of each school.

However, there are some elements that would probably make the Public School Choice administrative work more efficient for the school district. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) asks that these be considered when designing the district's form.

Student name, school name, and grade information

- Parent contact information (address, phone, email, etc.)
- Parent consent form language
- Place for parents to decline option to transfer students
- Parent signature and date area
- Place for parents to indicate at least two choices of schools to which students can transfer, if multiple schools are available
- Academic achievement information about each school to which students can transfer can appear on this page
- District contact person and contact information for parents having questions

Remember that the form must be included with the Public School Choice letter that ISBE reviews prior to distribution to parents. Contact Evelyn Deimel (217-524-4832) or edeimel@isbe.net for further assistance.

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The district inserts specific information within the parentheses.

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

(district name) is committed to providing a high-quality educational program for your child. We are working hard to provide programs to help all students succeed in our school district.

Your child attends **(name of school)** which receives federal Title I funds. These funds provide help for your child to meet state achievement standards. In the 2009-2010 school year, the school did not meet the adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets. The school is currently in Federal school improvement status which means that your child was eligible for public school choice and supplemental educational services.

We do not have the AYP results for the 2010-2011 school year. We do know that students attending **(name of school)** will be eligible for public school choice and supplemental educational services.

For the 2011-2012 school year, your child continues to be eligible for public school choice. You may make a decision about your option for public school choice by choosing one of the following for your child.

- Remain at **(name of school)** and continue to receive the benefits of Title I academic services. If your family meets the low-income guidelines, you will receive additional information about Supplemental Educational Services in a letter.
- Transfer to **(name of school)** with transportation provided by the district. If demand for transportation exceeds funds available, priority will be given to the lowest-achieving students from low-income families. This school was making adequately yearly progress for the 2010-2011 school year.

If the district has more than one school making adequate yearly progress, at least one other should be listed here.

OPTIONAL: IF A SCHOOL IS CURRENTLY MAKING AYP BUT MIGHT ENTER SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STATUS, IT CAN BE A CHOICE-OPTION SCHOOL. THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH WOULD BE APPROPRIATE

- Transfer to **(name of school)** with transportation provided by the school district. If demand for transportation exceeds funds available, priority will be given to the lowest-achieving students from low-income families. This school was not in Federal improvement status for the 2010-2011 school year. However, if the school does not meet the AYP targets for the 2010-2011 school year, the school will be in school improvement status. Once a school is in status, the district may continue to provide transportation for the students to attend the school. However, the school district is not

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required to provide transportation for students attending the school.

To transfer your child to one of the schools listed above, you must complete the Student Transfer Form enclosed and **(process for applying for choice options here)** during the enrollment period. *This will be your only enrollment opportunity for the upcoming school year.* Enrollment is for a period beginning **(month, day, year)** and ending **(month, day, year)**.

School districts should give the parents a minimum of 14 days to choose a school after receiving notice of their options.

If you have questions or need assistance with this application, please contact **(contact information.)** Thank you for your continued interest in your child's education.

Sincerely,

Superintendent

Cc: The Honorable