

## No Child Left Behind

### Tips for Talking to the News Media

- When speaking with the news media—as well as with parents, community leaders and staff—remember that ***there are no “failing schools.”*** This is *not* the official terminology used by the state or federal governments. Unfortunately, it has seeped into media coverage of No Child Left Behind. Avoid its use. If you see or hear the term used by reporters, other educators, parents or community leaders, make every effort to point out the correct terminology under No Child Left Behind. Schools are considered “in need of improvement” and/or have not made “adequate yearly progress.”
- The federal No Child Left Behind Act does not use the term “failing,” according to Rod Paige, U.S. Secretary of Education. “In some cases, schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ may, in fact, be succeeding in some measures,” he said. “What’s important is that we know these schools are capable of getting better results...”

#### Preparing to Address Adequate Yearly Progress in Your Schools:

- Prepare media packets and include facts, figures, and program information about your school(s). Have these materials on hand at all times.
- Once you know the results of your Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report, determine three key messages and make sure these messages are concisely and consistently presented to the media.
- Verify that all the information you plan to share is factual, straightforward and consistent.
- Share the information with all board members, administrators and other key staff, so everyone is communicating the same messages.
- Use language geared toward your target audience. (The way you would discuss state test results with faculty will differ from how you explain test information to parents.) If possible, use classroom-based and school-based examples to get your message across.

#### Responding to Reporters’ Questions:

- Address the situation in your school or district only. Refrain from speculating or offering opinions about the results of other districts.
- Answer each question directly. Keep to the facts. Refrain from embellishing your comments. Avoid speculation.
- Mention the flaws in No Child Left Behind—but don’t dwell on them. Give emphasis to what your school district is doing to improve learning.
- If the media uses negative language, do not repeat it in your response. (Be mindful of negative buzzwords such as “failing.”)
- If asked a negative question, “bridge” your response to the positive message you want to convey.
- Remain positive. This is an opportunity to provide a clear picture about what your district does and the students it serves.
- Try to hold media interviews in an “active” program location, rather than in the superintendent’s or principal’s office. Let reporters see, firsthand, the activities taking place in your schools.

