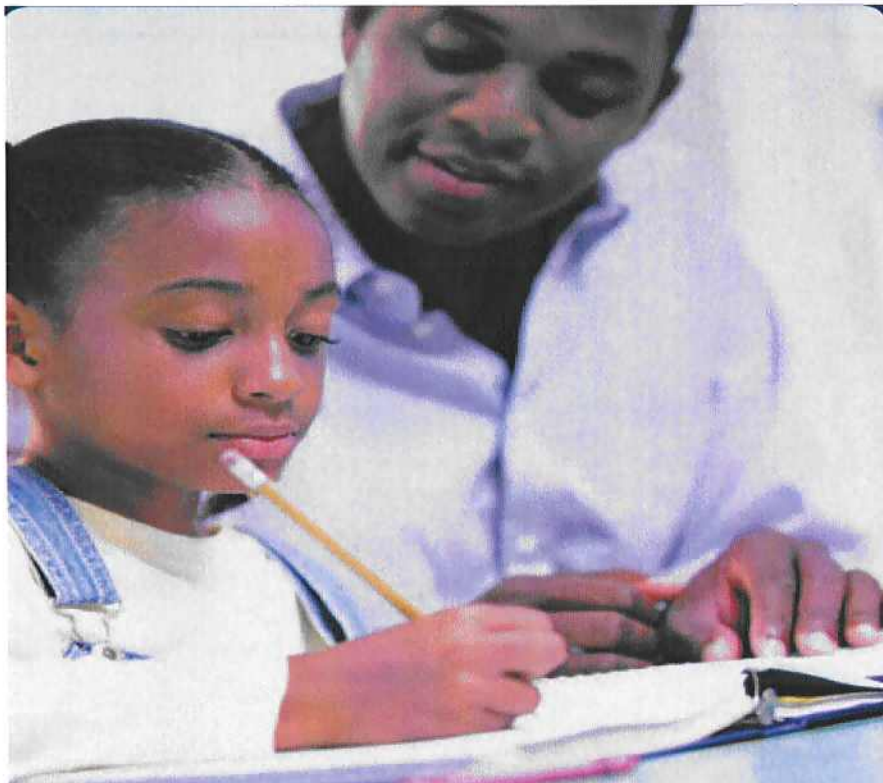


**Parent Empowerment:**  
***How to Make Sure Your Child Is Not Left Behind***

**A Parent's Guide to Advocating for Equal  
Educational Opportunities**



**Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law**



## INTRODUCTION

The achievement gap is a national phenomenon where lower-income African American and Latino students, as a group, perform poorer academically and score lower on standardized tests compared to their other counterparts. The achievement gap is often the result of:

- 1) Lower quality teaching and curriculum
- 2) Lower levels of expectation for achievement
- 3) Less access to high quality learning activities and resources

“No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) is a federal law passed in 2002 that aims to close the national achievement gap. NCLB combines increases in federal support for public schools under an existing law referred to as “Title I” or “ESEA”, but with greater accountability for results. The law introduced new requirements that schools must meet in terms of student achievement, teacher quality, and parental choice.

Because of these new requirements and the higher expectations they set, NCLB has become the 900-pound gorilla sitting in every public school classroom. After five years of operation, many teachers and administrators are frustrated with these requirements, and the public has primarily heard criticism of NCLB without learning about the advantages.

For example, while the tests required by NCLB take time and effort, they also provide an important tool for parents to help monitor what is happening, or not happening, in their children’s schools. NCLB also provides parents and students:

- Free tutoring services
- The right to transfer to a higher-performing school in the district
- A voice in school improvement plans

The information in this guidebook is designed to empower parents to take control of their children’s educational opportunities and to work to close the oversized achievement gap in the United States. Overall, this guidebook embraces two primary goals:

- 1) Inform parents about their rights under NCLB.
- 2) Educate parents on how to use the tools and resources available under NCLB to become effective advocates for their children.

