

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



What are my rights as a parent with a child in a Colorado public school?

It's important to know what your rights are as the parent. The law in the United States requires public schools to educate all students, no matter their immigration status. Schools cannot discriminate against students on the basis of race, color, national origin. Undocumented children cannot be denied their right to a free public education.

Rights of Children with Learning Differences

- Public schools are prohibited by federal law from discriminating against people with disabilities, and cannot deny them equal access to academic courses, field trips, extracurricular activities, school technology, and health services.
- Federal law grants all students who qualify for special education an individually designed instruction program at no cost to their parents. A student's [Individualized Education Plan \(IEP\)](#) and [Section 504](#) guides the school in assisting and accommodating K-12 kids who are challenged with learning, emotional, mental, and physical disabilities. The parent's signature is required to approve these plans. IEP meetings with parents must:
 - ▶ Occur at least once a year
 - ▶ Inform parents of their rights during the meeting
 - ▶ Have professional interpretation and translation available



Laws that protect students with learning differences

- ▶ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA](#))
- ▶ Colorado's Exceptional Children's Education Act ([ECEA](#))



Resources on learning differences for families

- ▶ [CDE's Parents/Families of a Child with a Disability](#): information about special education issues, practices and resources for parents by the Colorado Department of Education.
- ▶ [Understood](#): Resources to support students with learning differences and attention issues.

Rights of English Language Learners (ELs)

- **Translation and interpretation:** You have the right to receive the same information about school matters as parents who speak English. Let school officials know that you do not speak English and that you would prefer to receive school-related information in the language that you speak and understand. You may also request an interpreter for parent teacher conferences; school districts will make a reasonable effort to provide one. Contact your school district for more information about their translation and interpretation services.
- **Parent Communication Requirements for English Learners (EL):** Students with limited English proficiency cannot be turned away by schools, which must provide them with language instruction. Federal law requires informing parents of their children's placement in an English language program within one month after school starts and how they can be active participants in helping their children learn English and achieve academically. Parents must be told:
 - ▶ why their child has been identified for the program
 - ▶ the child's level of English proficiency
 - ▶ the recommendations for the child
 - ▶ the expectations of the program
 - ▶ the anticipated date the child will leave the program



Laws protecting EL students

- ▶ English Language Proficiency Act ELPA ([HB14-1298](#))
- ▶ United States Office for Civil Rights ([OCR](#))
- ▶ Title III of the Every Student Succeeds Act ([ESSA](#))



Resources for EL students and families

- ▶ [English Learner Toolkit](#): produced by the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, and the Department of Justice, outlining legal obligations for ELs.
- ▶ [Tool Kit for Hispanic Families](#): shows you what to expect from your schools, teachers and child and how you can help.

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Right to information: Schools and districts are expected to provide honest and timely information to parents about student performance, accountability and improvement planning.

Honest and timely data on student achievement: Schools and districts are expected to report school data and document plans in a transparent manner. CDE regularly updates a performance report for each public school, each school district and the state as a whole on [SchoolView](#). The performance report includes assessment, accountability, enrollment, demographics, staff, finance, course offerings and health information. Each public school is responsible for notifying parents of the availability of these reports. Schools must ask parents whether they want a printed copy of these reports and provide those copies, upon request.

Information about struggling schools and districts: Struggling schools and districts must notify parents within 30 days about its performance status and improvement plan. The school board must hold a public hearing at least 30 days after families have been notified to solicit input from parents on the contents of the plan. Family involvement strategies must be specified in the action plan, commonly referred to as a Unified Improvement Plan (UIP).



Right to Decision-Making Power: Schools and districts are expected to treat families as equal partners in decisions that affect children and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Development of Unified Improvement Plan (UIP): Federal law requires that schools identified for improvement develop and implement improvement plans in collaboration with stakeholders including, but not limited to, principals, other school leaders, teachers, and parents.

Family engagement policy: Every school district in Colorado must adopt a parent engagement policy. Districts shall identify a family partnership point of contact for family engagement training and resources.

Accountability Committees: State statute requires the formation of accountability committees in every school district and public school in Colorado with parent involvement in decision making.

School Accountability Committee (SAC)	District Accountability Committee (DAC)
At least 7 of the following members are required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 3 parents* from the school<input type="checkbox"/> 1 teacher at the school<input type="checkbox"/> The principal of the school<input type="checkbox"/> 1 adult member of a school organization<input type="checkbox"/> 1 person from the community * One parent must serve as chair or co-chair. SAC parents must reflect the student populations of the school.	At least 5 of the following members are required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 3 parents* from the district<input type="checkbox"/> 1 teacher employed by the district<input type="checkbox"/> 1 school administrator from the district<input type="checkbox"/> 1 person from business the business community * One parent must serve as chair or co-chair. DAC parents must reflect the student populations in the district. Districts with charter schools should have at least one charter school parent.
Responsibilities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Meet at least quarterly to discuss whether school is advancing or impeding school's performance plan.▪ Make recommendations to the principal on the school priorities for spending school funds.▪ Make recommendations concerning the preparation of the school's Unified Improvement Plan.▪ Help increase family engagement	Responsibilities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Meet at least quarterly to discuss whether school district is advancing or impeding school district's performance plan.▪ Make recommendations on spending priorities▪ Submit recommendations concerning preparation of district's performance plan▪ Review charter school applications▪ Help increase family engagement

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|  Laws Regarding Accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Changes to Strengthen The Accountability System For The Benefit of Students (HB18-1355)▶ Increasing Parent Involvement in Public Schools (SB 13-193)▶ Colorado's State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (link) |  Resources for Parent Participation in Decision Making: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ SAC/DAC and Family Engagement Promising Practices Materials – Resources on parent engagement, and best practices for SAC's and DAC's from the Colorado Department of Education's Office of Family-School Partnerships.▶ State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) - A state council reviewing best practices recommending strategies for increased parent involvement in public education. |
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