

New Parent Checklist Helps Empower Families to Support Children’s Success in School

U.S. Department of Education

As America’s 54 million students prepare to return to school this fall, the U.S. Department of Education, [America Achieves](#), [National Council of La Raza \(NCLR\)](#), [National PTA](#) and the [United Negro College Fund \(UNCF\)](#) released a [parent checklist](#) today with questions and resources that parents and caregivers can use to help ensure their children are getting the education they deserve. The checklist suggests key questions, tips for educational success and resources for more information.

“I have never met a parent who doesn’t want the best for their child. However, it can be hard for families to know how to support their child’s education. Engaging with their educators is a good place to start. This tool provides families with questions to ask to work with educators to ensure schools are providing all students with an education that will prepare them for college and careers,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

The checklist follows the [set of rights](#) that the Department [recently released](#) outlining what families should be able to expect for their children's education. The rights follow the educational journey of a student—from access to quality preschool; to engagement in safe, well-resourced elementary and secondary schools that hold all students to high standards; to access to an affordable, quality college degree.

The checklist and the set of rights build on the Education Department’s work to reach out to parents—from the [Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#), to [tools that can help families and students select the best colleges for their needs](#), to support of Parent Training and Information Centers and Resource Centers.

“It is imperative that all children have a safe, healthy, supportive and well-resourced school in which to thrive and learn. And to help ensure a world class education is provided to every child, it is essential that our education systems are transparent, families are engaged and at the table, and families and educators work together to support student success,” said Laura Bay, president of National PTA. “National PTA is pleased to collaborate with the Department of Education, America Achieves, National Council of La Raza and the United Negro College Fund to bring the checklist to families nationwide to empower them with questions, tips and resources to make sure their children are getting a high-quality education that enables them to reach their full potential.”

"The Parent Checklist is a powerful resource that can help gauge whether a child is being sufficiently prepared for the quality education they deserve," said Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D., president and CEO of UNCF. "It's an extension of UNCF's commitment to building a college-going culture within the African-American community and providing support for getting more students to and through college."

“Just like all Americans, Latino parents understand the importance of the need to engage in their child’s education in order for them to succeed,” said Janet Murguía, President and CEO, NCLR.

“This is why NCLR and our Affiliates support the ‘Checklist,’ a tool that will help empower all parents to ask the right questions and participate fully in their children's education.”

The [checklist](#) suggests these “key questions” that parents should pose to their child’s educators:

Quality: Is my child getting a great education?

- How will you keep me informed about how my child is doing on a regular basis? How can we work together if my child falls behind?
- Is my child on grade level, and on track to be ready for college and a career? How do I know?

Ready for Success: Will my child be prepared to succeed in whatever comes next?

- How will you measure my child’s progress and ability in subjects including reading, math, science, the arts, social and emotional development, and other activities?
- How much time will my child spend preparing for and taking state and district tests? How will my child’s teacher and I know how to use the results to help my child make progress?

Safe and Healthy: Is my child safe and cared for at school?

- What programs are in place to ensure that the school is a safe, nurturing and positive environment? What are the discipline and bullying policies at the school?
- Are the meals and snacks provided healthy? How much time is there for recess and/or exercise?

Great Teachers: Is my child engaged and learning every day?

- How do I know my child’s teachers are effective?
- How much time do teachers get to collaborate with one another?
- What kind of professional development is available to teachers here?

Equity and Fairness: Does my child, and every child at my child’s school or program, have the opportunity to succeed and be treated fairly?

- How does the school make sure that all students are treated fairly? (For example, are there any differences in suspension/expulsion rates by race or gender?)
- Does the school offer all students access to the classes they need to prepare them for success, including English language learners and students with special needs (for example, Algebra I and II, gifted and talented classes, science labs, AP or IB classes, art, music)?

The reference guide also includes some ways teachers suggest parents can support their children’s success in school. For example:

- Set high expectations for your child.
- Make sure your child is in school every day and on time. Attendance matters.
- Work collaboratively with your child's teachers and talk to them about goals and expectations for your child.
- Talk to your child each day about what he or she is doing in school and discuss what he or she learned.
- Encourage your child to complete assignments, and see that she or he finishes them.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Participate in family engagement and volunteer opportunities. Set high expectations for your child.

Lastly, the checklist suggests next steps for families to take if their child is not getting a strong education and resources for more information. Among the sites on line are: [age-appropriate guides](#) to supplement this reference guide; [information on how your school compares](#) to other schools; [school-based parent organizations](#); [bullying prevention](#); [nutrition](#); [disability issues](#); [limited-English challenges](#); [early childhood learning](#); and [homelessness](#).

If you have questions or comments about this resource, contact:

Heartland@ed.gov

One Petticoat Place

1010 Walnut

Kansas City, MO 64114

(816) 268-0400

(Serving Iowa, Kansas, Missouri & Nebraska)

Jeanne Ackerson, Public Affairs Specialist, (816) 268-0401, Jeanne.Ackerson@ed.gov

Elaine Venard, Staff Assistant, (816) 268-0404, Elaine.Venard@ed.gov