

Parent Trigger Fact Sheet

Parent Trigger Laws Ignite Controversy, not Parent-School-Community Collaboration

What is a “parent trigger”?

Described by advocates as a citizen initiative to balance the power between parents, school administrators, and educators in the school reform process, “parent trigger” laws are being advocated as a “silver bullet” that cuts through the complexities of the “education establishment” and gives parents new, formal, legal power to fix their own children's schools.

California, Mississippi, and Tennessee enacted “parent trigger” laws in 2010. In California, the parent trigger law allows 51 percent of parents with children attending a “low performing” school to sign a petition and force actions such as closing the school down completely, replacing the principal, firing 50 percent of the teachers, or converting it into a charter school.

Parent Empowerment or Trojan Horse?

Some parents, policy analysts, and journalists question the genuineness of “parent trigger” legislation, contending that such policy is being misused to promote the growth of charter schools. There is also growing evidence that funding for many of the “parent trigger” initiatives comes from wealthy philanthropists, policymakers, and think tanks that support charter school expansion and free market approaches to school reform. A January 2011 *Los Angeles Times* editorial concluded that the “Parent trigger must not become a means for private charter groups to get free school buildings through secret proceedings.”

Parent-School-Community Partnerships are the Antidote to “Parent Triggers”

CTA encourages its local chapters to collaborate with schools and school districts to:

- Establish effective, two-way communications with families of all backgrounds
- Partner with families to promote positive student outcomes and support strategies to reach school improvement goals
- Engage all school personnel in promoting family-school-community partnerships
- Support passage of laws and policies and/or collective bargaining agreements that provide funding and resources to support solutions that work.

CTA believes that school reform is a shared responsibility and supports policies and practices that link schools, families, and communities to achieve improvement goals.