

Communicating about...

Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind—2003

The New Jersey State Department of Education began releasing information about schools' academic progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in September. The information released to date consists of listings of schools and reflects student performance in language arts literacy and mathematics on the High School Proficiency Assessment (11th grade) and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment administered in the spring of 2003. State education officials expect to release information regarding student performance on the NJ ASK-4 (4th grade) in mid-November.

Eventually, the state education department will issue results for individual schools in the form of the new School Report Card (the "NCLB School Report Card"), which reflects reporting requirements under the federal law.

Adequate Yearly Progress in 2003

Signed by President Bush in 2002, NCLB requires that all students meet state-determined proficiency levels by 2014. For New Jersey that means every single student must score at "proficient" or "advanced proficient" levels on state assessments by 2014. To reach this "100% goal", New Jersey and other states developed incremental benchmarks—Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. In New Jersey, the AYP targets determine the percentage of students in each school—and the percentage of students in each of a number of subgroups within the school—who must score at "proficient" or "advanced proficient" levels for their school to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

For 2003 and 2004, New Jersey has established the following AYP targets:

Test/ Grade Level	Subject	2003 and 2004 AYP Target <i>(Percentage of students scoring at proficient or advanced proficient levels)</i>
HSPA (Grade 11)	Language Arts Literacy	73%
	Mathematics	55%
GEPA (Grade 8)	Language Arts Literacy	58%
	Mathematics	39%
NJ ASK-4 (Grade 4)	Language Arts Literacy	68%
	Mathematics	53%

The Impact of Subgroup Results

If the entire school population—or any one of a number of subgroups—does not meet these targets, then the school has not made Adequate Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. Subgroups include Students with Disabilities, Limited English Proficient Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, as well as several racial/ethnic groups. (A subgroup's test results is reported separately toward a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status *only* if 20 or more students within a grade level belong to the subgroup.)



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Additionally, to meet AYP targets 95% of students at each tested grade level and within each subgroup must take the assessment. Two other factors determine whether or not a school or school district has achieved Adequate Yearly Progress. For 2003, these factors are average daily attendance for elementary and middle schools and drop-out rates for high schools.

40 AYP Indicators

The Department of Education has identified 40 indicators in which a school must meet Adequate Yearly Progress targets for 2002-03. (The number of indicators was arrived at by using the following factors: the assessments in mathematics and language arts literacy; the grade levels tested; total student population tested; student subgroups tested; test participation rates; drop-out rates and attendance rates.) In addition to indicating whether or not a school made Adequate Yearly Progress, the Department of Education has been reporting the number of factors in which it has reached AYP targets. For example—

“Smallville High School made adequate yearly progress in 38 of 40 indicators.”

If a school does not reach the AYP target for any one of the 40 indicators, it is identified as not making Adequate Yearly Progress.

District-wide Adequate Yearly Progress

Adequate Yearly Progress status will also be reported for the entire school district, as well as for individual schools. If the total student population within a grade level tested district wide does not reach AYP targets—or if a subgroup of 20 or more students district wide does not reach AYP targets—then the district would be identified as not making Adequate Yearly Progress.

Schools ‘In Need of Improvement’

Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same content area (i.e., mathematics or language arts literacy) will be labeled “in need of improvement.” If they are schools that receive federal Title 1 funds, their students must be offered the opportunity to transfer to another school within the district that is not “in need of improvement.” In the future, Title 1 schools identified as being “in need of improvement” will be subject to a progressive series of requirements if they continue to miss AYP targets. These requirements would include providing “supplemental services,” such as after-school tutoring or summer programs, undergoing corrective action by the state, and restructuring of staff and programs.

Currently, there are 265 elementary and middle schools on the “in need of improvement” list, including 15 that were added as the result of 2003 GEPA and NJ ASK-4 test results and further analysis of 2002 test results. Since 2003 represented the first year under which Adequate Yearly Progress was recorded under the new High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), no New Jersey high schools are designated as being “in need of improvement.”

Federal Law/State Differences

Although No Child Left Behind is a federal law, it leaves implementation of its provisions to the 50 states, resulting in wide variations in benchmarks.

- The federal law requires states to set academic standards. However, individual states determine exactly what those standards will be.
- The federal law requires testing students in mathematics, reading and, starting in 2007-08, science. However, the tests are developed or identified by the individual states.



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- The law requires measurement of test results for a number of student subgroups to determine a school's or a school district's Adequate Yearly Progress. However, individual states establish the minimum number of students needed for a subgroup's test scores to count toward AYP targets. Most states set this minimum at 30 students; New Jersey set the minimum at 20. The result: in New Jersey, subgroup test results can affect the AYP status of a greater number of schools and school districts.

These differences in academic standards, testing instruments and other policy decisions among the states should be kept in mind when communicating about your schools' Adequate Yearly Progress.

Communications Challenges

Communicating to parents, school staff and the news media about No Child Left Behind should place Adequate Yearly Progress reports in proper context. While you should express concern about NCLB's flaws and the challenges the law poses to your schools, it is essential that you also stress your district's efforts to help students attain proficiency.

- Parents and other members of the community will want to know why a school did not make AYP—*but they should also know about the indicators in which a school attained Adequate Yearly Progress.*
- They will want to know the school district's plan of action to help students reach proficiency levels—*but they should also know the extent of progress made to date*, even if their school did not reach AYP targets on some indicators this year.

Moreover, there are many indicators of school progress in addition to those cited in the Adequate Yearly Progress reports. These include college attendance rates, progress of the overall student population toward education goals, progress made by special education students, school safety, and results of standardized assessments other than the state tests. These factors contribute to the complete picture of a school's academic program.

We have enclosed materials to help you address the NCLB Report Cards on behalf of your school board. The documents include—

- Responding to the News Media: Questions and Answers for School Board Presidents
- Tips for Talking to the News Media
- Sample news releases and sample letters to parents and staff.

Information Sources

The following Web pages provide important information about No Child Left Behind and Adequate Yearly Progress:

- The New Jersey School Boards Association's NCLB Web page: www.njsba.org/NCLB/index.htm
- The New Jersey State Department of Education's "No Child Left Behind" section: www.nj.gov/njded/grants/nclb/
- The prototype for the NCLB Report Cards. Using 2001-02 test data, these prototype report cards illustrate how the state Department of Education will report each school's Adequate Yearly Progress based on 2003 testing information: <http://education.state.nj.us/rc/nclb.html>

Additional information is available by calling the NJSBA Public Information Department toll free at 1- 888-886-5722, Ext. 5205.

