

## Sample Letter to Staff: Adequate Yearly Progress

[Date]

Dear [school/district] Employee:

The New Jersey State Department of Education recently began releasing information about our schools' academic progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The information reflects student performance in language arts literacy and mathematics on the three state proficiency tests administered in the spring of 2003: the High School Proficiency Assessment (11<sup>th</sup> grade); the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (8<sup>th</sup> grade); and NJ ASK 4 (4<sup>th</sup> grade).

Signed by President Bush in 2002, NCLB requires that all students meet state-determined proficiency levels by 2014. For New Jersey this will mean 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" and "advanced proficient" levels for their school to make Adequate Yearly Progress.

For 2003 and 2004, New Jersey has established the following AYP targets, based on the percentage of students scoring at proficient or advanced proficient levels on state tests:

**HSPA**—Language Arts Literacy, 73%; Mathematics, 55%.

**GEPA**—Language Arts Literacy, 58%; Mathematics, 39%.

**NJ ASK 4**—Language Arts Literacy, 68%; Mathematics, 53%.

If the entire school population—or any one of the subgroups within the school—does not meet these targets, then the school will be deemed as not making Adequate Yearly Progress. Subgroups will include Students with Disabilities, Limited English Proficient Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, as well as several racial/ethnic groups. (A subgroup's test results will count toward a school's Adequate Yearly Progress status only if 20 or more students within a grade level belong to the subgroup.)

Like many other New Jersey school districts, we expect that a number of our schools may be identified as not making Adequate Yearly Progress. (Your principal will have further information about your school's AYP status.)

The [name of school district] Public Schools remain firmly committed to meeting the needs of each student. We have implemented programs and strategies aimed at improving student academic achievement and meeting our state's academic standards. [List programs]

We can expect that the NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress reports will receive much news media attention. Unfortunately, the reporting system that the federal government now requires may lead to inaccurate public perceptions about the progress we are making in our schools. I want to assure you that our district will make every effort to put the Adequate Yearly Progress information in proper context.

Nonetheless, No Child Left Behind is based on an admirable principle: ensuring quality education for all children. That's a goal we support. We are confident that your dedication to quality instruction will continue to have a positive impact on our children's ability to attain federal, state and local academic goals.

Details about the No Child Left Behind Act and New Jersey's plans to implement its provisions are available on the New Jersey State Department of Education's Web site at [www.nj.gov/njded/grants/nclb/](http://www.nj.gov/njded/grants/nclb/).

We also promise to update you in a timely manner as further information unfolds.

Sincerely,

[superintendent's signature]

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