

Adequate Yearly Progress Under the No Child Left Behind Act

Federal No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to make adequate yearly progress toward having students become proficient in English and math

A goal of Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 “is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.” States must align academic content with student performance standards and annually assess students’ progress in achieving those standards. Schools, school districts, and each state must use a statewide educational accountability system to determine whether all students in a school are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward having 100 percent of students perform proficiently in English and math by the 2013-2014 school year.

Each state must define proficiency and set its own starting point for measuring AYP, which is based on the performance of the lowest performing demographic subgroup of students or lowest achieving schools. Schools that receive Title I funds suffer increasingly severe consequences each year they do not make AYP. The consequences range from bussing students to different schools within a district and providing before and after school tutoring programs to reassigning or dismissing staff, a state taking over a school, and closing schools. Although the timeline is based on improving student performance in “equal” increments, some states require less of students during an initial two- or three-year period and leave large annual improvements for later years.

No Child Left Behind Act prescribes local accountability measures and timelines for student progress

Historically, school districts have developed school accountability measures locally while implementing federal and state education requirements. In contrast, the No Child Left Behind Act prescribes school and district-level accountability measures and timelines. The federal law:

- requires schools and districts to improve students’ performance and achieve specific performance targets
- mandates that all students participate in large-scale statewide assessments
- requires public reporting of school and district-level test scores
- attaches consequences to schools and school districts that fail to achieve AYP

Schools must meet and sustain performance levels to make adequate yearly progress

The federal law requires schools to determine whether all students and specific subgroups of students (limited English proficiency students, students with disabilities, students eligible for free and reduced price meals, and white, black, Asian Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Hispanic students) are making AYP. The fewer student subgroups identified and counted within a school, the fewer chances for the school to fail to make AYP. Schools fail to make AYP if they fail

to meet or sustain specific levels of performance for all students and for each identified student subgroup. Schools also fail to make AYP if fewer than 95 percent of students in each identified subgroup are tested.

Minnesota identified fewer schools as not making adequate yearly progress than did other states

There is a wide range in state-by-state percentages of schools identified as not making adequate yearly progress. The federal law allows each state to establish its own academic goals, use state-developed tests to assess students' mastery of those goals, and define what is proficient on state tests. Under its Title I plan, Minnesota defines as proficient those students who achieve a score of 1,420 or higher on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs). Although data for a number of Minnesota's smallest schools remain to be analyzed, at the end of summer 2003, the Minnesota Department of Education identified 8 percent, or 144 schools throughout the state, as not making AYP toward 100 percent student proficiency in English and math.

The number of students in a subgroup needed to yield statistically reliable information varies by state. Each state decides how many students must be in a particular student subgroup before the performance of that subgroup is included in calculating a school's AYP. Minnesota identified relatively fewer schools as not making AYP than did many other states. This is, in part, because Minnesota elected to require a minimum of 40 disabled students, instead of 20, to establish the statistical reliability of the subgroup.

Adequate yearly progress indicators include student performance, student attendance, and graduation rates

Federal and state accountability systems also use high school graduation rates and student attendance rates in elementary and middle school to sanction low-performing schools, recognize high-performing schools, and target teacher improvement efforts. To satisfy federal AYP requirements for graduation in Minnesota, high schools and school districts must have, or show acceptable improvement toward an average graduation rate of 80 percent. To satisfy federal AYP requirements for attendance in Minnesota, elementary and middle schools and school districts must have, or show acceptable improvement toward a daily attendance rate of 90 percent. Both attendance and graduation rates are calculated for all students in a school. Satisfactory scores on attendance and graduation rates do not cancel out a school's failure to make AYP as measured by students' test results.

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