



NJDOE News

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DOE Updates Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) Timeline for School Notification Under Federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*; *Addresses "Early Warning" Status of High Schools*

The Department of Education today announced that based on preliminary data, 67 percent of the high schools in the state are on the "early warning" list under the federally-mandated *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. The announcement is based on what's called Cycle I data and is subject to change.

NCLB requires New Jersey and the other states to implement a single accountability system to identify the rate of school progress to meet the law's stated goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014. The announcement today is part of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) component, a main part of the law.

In discussing the "Early Warning" status of the high schools, Commissioner of Education William L. Librera, joined by senior staff, also outlined the status of 2003 data and the projected timeline for when final 2003 data, also known as Cycle II data, will be reported to the federal government, as required under the act.

The Commissioner also outlined the many resources the DOE and McGreevey Administration continue to use in helping districts on account of the NCLB provisions. This includes the Governor's continued commitment to early childhood literacy, improved teaching standards and preparation, and school construction — three points that are essential in making sure all schools see progress with each passing year.

The information discussed today in a press briefing is a precursor to the final data, which will identify the status of what schools in the state have not met their AYP targets for the 2003 year. This information should be available by the end of the month, officials said.

"Adequately Yearly Progress as it relates to the federal act is an important, yet complicated, process," Commissioner Librera. "We want the people of New Jersey to know that the Department is in the final stages of verifying all data and will be further discussing this issue shortly."

Because this is the first year that High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) results were used, high schools under AYP are identified as "Early Warning" schools. Should data from 2004 reflect no change, they would be deemed in the first year of "In Need of Improvement" under the federal law. Should issues be addressed and the HSPA reflect such change, the schools would be removed from "Early Warning" status. All schools are designated as in need of improvement based on two consecutive years of data.

The preliminary percentage of early warning schools is comparable to other states in the nation who have set high standards for proficiency, Commissioner Librera said. In order to achieve early warning status, schools could miss the cut by as little as less than 1 percent on a single indicator out of a total 41 for Adequate Yearly Progress.

"Despite our concerns with some of the components of NCLB, designating these schools as "early warning" provides the Department of Education with the opportunity to assist local districts in improving their programs and making sure that every child in school, in every program, has a chance to succeed," Commissioner of Education William L. Librera said. "At its core, we view this as an opportunity to both challenge and assess our schools, and lend assistance where needed."

"While the Department shares Governor James E. McGreevey's concerns about NCLB funding and the strict timelines associated with the law, we are doing our very best to comply and to help our districts."

The DOE is working aggressively to ensure that the data will be submitted to the federal government as quickly as possible. According to the federal government, AYP status must be determined and schools must be notified at the beginning of each school year.

"It is important to remember that long before NCLB was enacted, this Department has supported a chief

component of the law — that it is all of our jobs to educate each and every child who walks through our schools' doors," Librera said. "With AYP, we will continue to do our part to ensure the quality of education of all students in New Jersey. Overall, the bar for what it means to be a successful school has been raised."

DOE Resources

Commissioner Librera said there are a number of different resources available for school districts identified under NCLB of needing to make Adequately Yearly Progress. Most recent examples include training sessions in each of the three regions: Northern, Central and Southern.

One of Gov. James E. McGreevey's top educational reform programs, the Reading Coach initiative, helps improve proficiency in Reading/Language Arts Literacy — and is a key resource in addressing this issue. Just last week, the Governor announced that in the coming year, his administration will have doubled the size of the Reading Coach program.

Based on the Governor's mission to target early literacy so that every child can read at or above grade level by the end of the third grade, the Reading Coach program will have impacted 50,000 children by the end of its second year.

The DOE hosted several workshops for school principals, teachers and other educators throughout the first year of the NCLB Act and has continued throughout the summer as well. This includes creating an NCLB Advisory Panel and continued support for the Reading First program.

Support teams are also working in the Abbott School Districts in order to raise the quality of education in our disadvantaged school districts and continue to close the gap between them and our wealthiest school districts — both financially and academically.

The Department is dedicated to continued help for districts as the AYP component of the NCLB Act moves forward.

Preliminary High School Data

The preliminary high school percentage addressed today is based on the 2003 HSPA results. The exam is administered each year to eleventh graders to measure their progress towards meeting the state's academic standards. It also serves as a high school graduation requirement in New Jersey.

By receiving an early warning notice, a school is not subject to any penalties and is not required to develop a school improvement plan. However, if student achievement continues to lag for any subgroup in any school, the school will be required to implement a more stringent course of action.

NCLB requires each state to calculate student performance on standardized tests for 41 indicators, including special education, limited English proficient (LEP), and disadvantaged students. (See a full list of subgroups at the end of this press release.)

In discussing the issue today, Commissioner Librera stressed the overall quality of New Jersey high schools. "New Jersey high schools are among the best in the nation," he said. "For most of our high schools, these notices do not represent a diminished quality or any particular cause for alarm."

However, the Commissioner said that the notices do present the need for all high schools to broaden their efforts to help all of their students succeed.

"We should view this occasion as an opportunity to find ways to better serve diverse groups of students," Commissioner Librera said. "The Department of Education pledges its support and assistance as all schools work to develop and implement their responses to the challenges they face."

Staff from the central, regional and county offices of the Department of Education will continue to work with local districts and schools to increase the number of students who meet state standards.

2002 Elementary School Data

Based on 2002 assessment results, the DOE previously reported that 259 schools were "in need of improvement" (www.state.nj.us/njded/data/title1). Nine (9) schools were then removed from the list after meeting the state standards in literacy and mathematics. In addition, 36 schools successfully met their AYP targets for one year, meaning that if they meet the same target this coming year, they will be removed.

This list is subject to further change when the DOE reports its data to the federal government based on the final 2003 test results.

NCLB

NCLB, enacted in January 2002, requires all states to establish standards for accountability for all schools and districts in the states. Furthermore, it calls for the inclusion of all students, even students who may have been excluded or exempted from participating in the state assessment program in the past.

Since any sub-group of fewer than 20 students is not considered statistically significant, they were not counted for the purposes of this review.

The subgroups identified by NCLB for review are:

- White students;
- African American students;
- Hispanic students;
- Asian / Pacific Islander students;
- Native American / Indian students;
- Other racial group students;
- Economically disadvantaged students;
- Students with disabilities; and
- Students of limited English proficiency (LEP).

For more information about Adequate Yearly Progress, the following Web sites should be of help:

- <http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/9C974109-4A70-4F5E-A07F-6DC90D656F0F/0/ABCAYP.pdf> (attached);
- <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/grants/nclb/policy/ayp/index.html>; and
- <http://www.nj.gov/njded/grants/nclb/faq.shtml#E>.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.