



NJDOE News

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DOE Updates Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) Status for Grade Eight, High Schools; Numbers Comparable to Nationwide Averages for No Child Left Behind Requirements

▶ [Media Packet - NJ Accountability System Summary Reports - NCLB](#)

As required by the federal government, The Department of Education (DOE) today announced its up-to-date status under the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status of the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act. The information reflects "early warning" status for high schools, as well as the "in need of improvement" designation for eighth-grade schools.

"It is important to remember several contexts when discussing AYP," Commissioner of Education William L. Librera said. "First, we remain concerned about the strict timelines the federal government has issued. Second, and more important, the federal government has required a label for these schools. That label is 'in need of improvement.'

"Our biggest concern remains that these schools, identified as 'in need of improvement,' are unfairly called 'failing,'" Commissioner Librera said. "When one looks at the schools —whether they are identified as "early warning" or "in need of improvement — one sees that some of the very best schools in the state, let alone the nation, have been identified.

"We steadfastly question any label that calls these schools 'failing,'" the Commissioner said. "It's wrong, and it's unfair to the many schools who continue to succeed. The implementation of this law, as we have said, is wrong and bad policy."

In updating the state's AYP status, the Commissioner reported that 271 out of the 361 high schools in the state have been warned of their "early warning" status. Should the schools not improve in the categories where they missed the mark next year, than the schools would be placed in the "needs improvement" category. The "needs improvement" category is based on two consecutive years of data.

As it stands, 256 schools encompassing grade eight are recognized as "in need of improvement." It is important to note that a school does not make AYP if it does not reach one of 40 indicators, let alone all 40, for two consecutive years.

In reporting on the 2003 GEPA scores, the Commissioner said that six schools have been added to the "in need of improvement" category. They are: Number 8 Elementary School in Paterson; PS #8 in Jersey City; Fanny D. Rittenberg School in Egg Harbor; Memorial High School in Millville; Woodlynne Elementary School in Woodlynne; and Lakewood Middle School in Lakewood. (Please see attached [list](#)).

The third component of AYP, elementary schools, will be addressed once all data from the 2003 NJASK4 is received and finalized. There is a possibility that 14 schools could be identified as "in need of improvement" based on NJASK4 data once it is finalized. This should occur within a week. The final data will enable the DOE to compare elementary and middle schools for a final number of schools "in need of improvement."

2003 High School Data

In an effort to help high schools who may be placed on "needs improvement" status, the DOE opted to identify "early warning" schools so that they may be able to rectify the issues that would put them in the "needs improvement" category. The "early warning" status for high schools in New Jersey is based solely on 2003 High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) data, which serves as a high school graduation requirement in New Jersey.

Because 2002 is considered a non-operational year for *NCLB* reporting purposes, 2003 is the benchmark year for HSPA data.

NCLB requires each state to calculate student performance on standardized tests for 40 indicators, including special education, limited English proficient (LEP), and disadvantaged students. (Please see a full list of subgroups at the end of this press release).

States must look at test results annually to determine if AYP is met. Next year, schools will have two years of data to identify whether they will be designated as "in need of improvement."

In discussing the issue today, Commissioner Librera again 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 redouble their efforts 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 response 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.

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.

2002 and 2003 Grade Eight 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.

There are currently 256 schools in New Jersey on the "in need of improvement" list — six of them are new to the list and were announced today.

Because this is the third year of data collection for grade eight and the GEPA, schools may be either identified as "early warning" status or designated as "in need of improvement."

"Identifying these schools 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 Librera said. "While the Department completely 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 with the law."

"The numbers we're talking about today are similar to numbers across the country for states who have set high standards," Commissioner of Education William L. Librera said. "We view this as an opportunity to both challenge and assess our schools, and lend assistance where needed. We also want to continue to stress how inaccurate and misleading these reporting requirements are."

The DOE has worked aggressively to ensure that the data submitted to the federal government is verified and submitted to the federal government as quickly as possible. According to the federal government, AYP status must be determined and schools have to be notified at the beginning of each school year. For that reason, Department officials continue to verify all additional data in terms of grade eight and elementary schools so that all data is released at the same time.

"It is important to remember that a chief component of NCLB that this Department supports is that it is all of our jobs to educate each and every child that 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. Tuesday, Department officials hosted such a session at Camden County College in the Southern Region.

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 poorest 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 Act moves forward.

(Attached is a guide for further understanding the current high school and grade eight information).

No Child Left Behind Act

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.

The No Child Left Behind Act 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.

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.