

THE FACTS ABOUT...

State departments across the nation have listed more than 8,000 Title I schools as “in need of improvement.” It is critical to keep those numbers in context.

The U.S. Department of Education is reporting the information as *provided by the states* as part of a 1994 law that pre-dates President Bush’s *No Child Left Behind Act*.

- Under our federal system and the 1994 law, states were required to define “adequate yearly progress.” Since then, states have chosen many ways to report their data—not every state defines achieving and underachieving schools in the same way.
- Some states define progress as closing the achievement gap between sub-groups of students. Others define it as meeting absolute targets on state tests. A third way is measuring growth or progress on state tests from one year to another. No matter what the method, the *state* establishes the target.

The state-supplied data tell us something we already knew: that America’s schools need help. Many of our schools are lagging and could do much better.

- More than 35 years after Congress passed the first Elementary and Secondary Education Act, public school spending per-pupil has more than doubled—even when adjusted for inflation—from \$2,853 in 1965-66 to \$7,086 in 1999-00.
- Since 1965, the federal government has spent more than \$321 billion on education.
- But over the last two decades, reading and math scores have been stagnant.

Next year, *No Child Left Behind* has accountability reforms that will improve the quality of information and puts that information to use.

- Information is the key to identifying and solving the challenges in education. Parents and the public have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent in the education system.
- Under *No Child Left Behind*, states will revisit their definition of “adequate yearly progress”—to meet the goals of closing the achievement gap and ensuring every child is learning proficiently by 2012-13.
- Unlike prior years, states will be required to publicize these schools.

No Child Left Behind also requires states, school districts and schools to provide annual report cards on the following:

- student academic achievement disaggregated by subgroups,
- comparison of students at basic, proficient, and advanced levels of academic achievement,
- graduation rates,
- professional qualifications of teachers,
- percentages of students not tested, and
- whether the school has been identified as “in need of improvement.”

Even though school data will improve next year under *No Child Left Behind*, the bipartisan law offers many children and schools help now.

- If a school fails to make adequate yearly progress for two years and continues to fail after receiving special help and resources, then students are eligible to transfer to another public school with transportation provided. If a school continues to fail, disadvantaged students in these schools are also eligible for “supplemental services” such as tutoring, after-school help, and summer school.
- Some low-performing Title I schools will have to offer public school choice and supplemental services as early as Fall 2002.

In short, for the first time in federal education policy, schools, districts and states will be able to use high-quality information for data-driven reforms so that we can improve public education for every child.