

THE FACTS ABOUT...

Every great effort to improve and transform our nation begins with a moral vision and setting higher standards and specific goals on the way to realizing that vision.

WHY ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS IS THE CORNERSTONE OF REFORM AND RENEWAL IN EDUCATION:

Measuring “adequate yearly progress” shows this nation’s commitment to every child.

- Adequate yearly progress is the minimum level of improvement school districts and schools must achieve every year. It is the bar of improvement set by each state for each school to ensure that every child is achieving.
- In technical terms, “adequate yearly progress” refers to the growth rate in the percentage of students who achieve the states definition of academic proficiency. Each state will set the AYP gains every school must meet to reach 100 percent proficiency at the end of 12 years.

Why is “adequate yearly progress” so important for children?

- Each state is challenged to set high standards for improving academic achievement every year in order to improve the quality of education for all students. Under *No Child Left Behind*, “adequate yearly progress” measures are like the individual steps up a ladder—on the way to our nation’s bipartisan goal of closing the achievement gap and ensuring *every* child is proficient in math and reading by 2013-14.

Testing tells parents, communities, educators and school boards which schools are doing well. If a school takes a challenging population and achieves great results, testing will show that. If a school is allowing certain groups to fall behind year after year, testing will expose that, too.

By testing every child in every school, parents and teachers will know the academic achievement of each group of students and can work to close the achievement gap and ensure that no child will be left behind. That’s why test scores will be broken out into the following sub-groups:

- economic background,
- race and ethnicity,
- English proficiency,
- and disability.

What does all this information and knowledge mean for parents?

With this adequate yearly progress information in hand, parents, teachers, and the public will know the academic achievement of each group of students and which schools are reaching children the best.

- Defining “adequate yearly progress” ensures that every school improves every year so that every child—regardless of race, parent’s income or family background—learns and excels.
- Tracking “adequate yearly progress” will help recognize great schools making great strides in teaching all children.
- And by following “adequate yearly progress” at schools where children are not learning, parents and education officials will know which schools *need* to improve.

Bottomline: “Adequate yearly progress” is a critical building block in creating better schools.

Under *No Child Left Behind* parents will know when their child’s school needs improvement and receive annual report cards on the following:

- 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.”

The information that comes from measuring the yearly progress of schools is also the basis to give parents new options and choices for helping their children when they fall behind.

- Under *No Child Left Behind*, schools that fail to teach children will be expected to improve—even as children are thrown a lifeline to ensure they are not trapped by bureaucracies struggling to improve.
- “Adequate yearly progress” ensures that even when schools aren’t improving, children will still have access to a better school.

When a school does not show “adequate yearly progress”...

- **for two years**, then the school will be identified before the beginning of the next school year as needing school improvement. The school will develop a two-year plan for improvement, and school officials will receive help and technical assistance. Every student assigned to the school will be given the option to transfer to a better public school in the district or a public charter school.
- **for three years**, then the school remains in school improvement status and the district must continue to offer public school choice to all students. The school must also provide supplemental education services to disadvantaged children who remain at the school. Parents can choose the services their child needs from a list of approved providers.
- **for four years**, then the district must implement certain corrective actions to improve the school, such as replacing certain staff or fully implementing a new curriculum, while continuing to offer public school choice and supplemental services—such as after-school tutoring programs and summer school.
- **for five years**, then the school will be identified for restructuring. Local officials will develop a school plan and make the necessary arrangements to implement school action plans, such as state takeover, the hiring of a private management contractor, converting to a charter school, or significant staff restructuring.

Demanding adequate yearly progress is a bipartisan challenge from Democrats and Republicans in Congress who have united under President Bush’s leadership to set a new standard of excellence and accomplishment for education.

- *No Child Left Behind* passed Congress by votes of 87 to 10 in the Senate and 381 to 41 in the House.
- It is a bipartisan declaration for a new education future. 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. And this does not include the *trillions* spent by local and state governments.
- But over the last two decades, reading and math scores have remained stagnant.
- In a marked departure from the past, Democrats and Republicans came to a clear agreement: to use the record spending increases in this new legislation to demand real results and improve student achievement.

***No Child Left Behind* represents a new spirit—the federal government is working *with* the states to support and build on local and state efforts to improve education and guarantee “yearly progress.”**

- In a spirit of partnership with state and local governments U.S. Department of Education officials have met early and often with parents, teachers, superintendents, principals, state school chiefs, and governors to *listen and learn* about their concerns and to get their recommendations.
- States with high quality accountability systems in place can build on their previous efforts.
- State officials will define the “adequate yearly progress” of the schools in their state to ensure proficiency in 12 years.
- As a result, U.S. Department of Education officials have issued and will continue to issue guidance to help their colleagues at the state and local level understand the law, its requirements, and federal oversight.

It is important to stress once again: The U.S. Department of Education will *not* define adequate yearly progress. As the law directs, AYP will be defined by the *states*, not the federal government.