

# “No Child Left Behind” in Pennsylvania

# An overview



The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) gave the federal government a new, much larger role in K-12 education, with the goal of holding public schools more accountable for student achievement. Key areas of NCLB include:

- Testing students
- Measuring each school’s “Adequate Yearly Progress”
- Identifying “Persistently Dangerous” schools
- Defining teacher quality
- Reporting test results and other school information
- Involving parents



OVERVIEW

# Testing students

For states to receive federal education funds, the federal government requires statewide student testing in reading, math and science for students in public schools (including charter schools). Under NCLB, some schools' test scores in reading and math can trigger new options for families and significant consequences for the school and district. NCLB also places more importance on the percentage of students who are tested, and which students are tested, in each school. According to the law, tests should be based on standards—what students are expected to know and be able to do in each subject area—which are different for each state.

## WHO IS TESTED?

	Grade levels with required testing	Year implemented in Pennsylvania
<b>Reading &amp; Math</b>	3-8 Once in high school	Grades 3, 5, 8, 11 tested in 2004 Grades 4, 6, 7 tested by 2005/06
<b>Science</b>	Once at each level	Grades 4, 7, 10 tested by 2007/08

State test: *Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)*

- A small number of students who receive special education services take an alternate test.
- Students learning English as a second language (“English Language Learners”) take an extra test in English Language Proficiency.



NCLB aims for all students scoring at grade level.



# Measuring each school's “Adequate Yearly Progress”

NCLB aims to have ALL public school students scoring at “proficient” or “advanced” levels on state reading and math tests by the school year 2013/14. NCLB holds schools and districts accountable for “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) toward meeting that goal. Each state must determine whether or not schools and districts have made AYP in these areas:

- The percentage of students who met test score goals
- The percentage of students who took the tests (called test “participation”)
- Graduation rates, for high schools
- One other measure of school performance for elementary and middle schools, chosen by the state

Districts are also accountable to the state for meeting AYP goals in all of their schools, and the state is accountable to the federal government. Each state created its own plan to meet the 2014 target.

## WHAT DETERMINES ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS?

To make sure schools are held accountable for all students, NCLB requires test scores to be averaged by:

- Race/ethnicity
- Family income (eligibility for free/reduced lunch)
- Special education status
- English Language Learner status

Each of these “subgroups”—not just students overall—must meet goals for test scores and test participation for a school to make AYP. Exceptions are made for schools that have very few students in one or more subgroups.

## WHAT DOES ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS MEAN FOR PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS?

*Testing.* Even though NCLB doesn’t require testing at all mandated grade levels until 2005/06, states had to identify schools that didn’t meet AYP goals based on testing that took place before NCLB was passed. Pennsylvania has set test score goals for schools from 2002/03 to 2013/14.

	Reading: Percent Proficient/Advanced	Math: Percent Proficient/Advanced
2002-04*	45%	35%
2005-07	54	45
2008-10	63	56
2011	72	67
2012	81	78
2013	91	89
2014	100	100

*\*Third grade was tested in 2003/04, but not included in AYP.*

However, NCLB and the Pennsylvania plan allow for many ways of looking at test scores. For example, schools that don’t meet these goals may still make AYP if test scores improved significantly, according to the state’s definition.

Test participation must be 95 percent for all subgroups.

*Other measures.* Other measures of AYP are:

- **Student daily attendance** in elementary and middle schools
- **Graduation rates in high schools** (a comparison of twelfth graders who graduate to the same group of students who entered as ninth graders four years before)

To make AYP, schools must show improvement over the previous year, until they reach 90 percent for attendance, 80 percent for graduation rate.

AYP = All subgroups meeting test score goals + 95% test participation (all subgroups) + improvement in attendance or graduation rate

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR NOT MAKING AYP?

Schools that don't meet the state's AYP goals for two years in a row enter a cycle of "school improvement." These schools are required to take certain actions (outlined below) before the beginning of the school year. If a school continues to fall short of AYP goals and remains in the cycle, consequences for one year are carried over to the next.

*Note:* In the federal law, consequences apply only to schools that receive federal Title I funding based on family poverty levels (although all public schools are supposed to meet the 2013/14 target). Pennsylvania has chosen to apply consequences to all public schools, regardless of Title I status.

### YEAR 1: "Warning"

*Consequences:* School is placed on notice.

### YEAR 2: "School Improvement I"

*Consequences:* Districts must offer students the option to transfer from the "improvement" school to another public school that isn't in school improvement. Districts pay for transportation.

### YEAR 3: "School Improvement II"

*Consequences:* Districts must offer students from low-income families free tutoring services from approved providers (known as "Supplemental Educational Services"). Providers may be community-based nonprofits, private companies, Internet-based companies, religious groups, or other schools. Districts pay the providers. This option is only available to students who don't transfer to schools making AYP. Districts can give priority to the lowest-achieving students if they can't meet all requests.

### YEAR 4: "Corrective Action I"

*Consequences:* Districts must take at least one "corrective action" at these schools, which might be changes in the staff or curriculum, lengthening the school day or year, or another action.

### YEAR 5: "Corrective Action II"

*Consequences:* Districts must create a plan, to be carried out the next year, that includes at least one radical change—from replacing the staff, to turning over management of the school to a private company, to closing the school altogether.

**ALL YEARS:** The state provides assistance in the form of advisers and grants.

# Identifying "Persistently Dangerous" schools

Schools that meet a state's definition of "persistently dangerous" must also offer to transfer and transport students to another school not labeled as dangerous. In Pennsylvania, whether or not a school is designated "persistently dangerous" depends on the ratio of "dangerous incidents" (including incidents of weapons possession and violence that result in arrests) to the size of the school. Students who are victims of violence at any school may also transfer. The state's list of "persistently dangerous" schools is posted on the

Department of Education's website:

[www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us).

In 2003/04, no Pittsburgh schools met the definition.



# Reporting test results and other school information

Each year, states and districts must issue “report cards” with statewide and school-by-school data for all schools, districts and charter schools. For example, states and districts must report:

- Which schools have not made AYP, and why
- Test scores and attendance or graduation rates
- Which schools were labeled “Persistently Dangerous”
- Teacher qualifications

Pittsburgh’s report cards will be posted on the Internet each year.

Schools must notify parents:

- About their right to request the qualifications of their children’s teachers
- If their children have been taught by an uncertified teacher (a teacher who lacks full state certification) for four weeks in a row or longer

According to the law, information for parents should be in a format that parents can understand.



# Defining teacher quality

NCLB includes new requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals (teachers’ aides).

- Teachers of most academic subjects must be “highly qualified” by September 2006. In Pennsylvania, this means:
  - Full state certification (which includes passing national tests)
  - College degree in the relevant subject area (a math teacher majored in math, for example), and courses in how to teach

Recently hired teachers must already have these credentials.

- Teachers’ aides must have these qualifications:
  - At least two years of college courses, or
  - Passed a state or local test or evaluation
- States must review how teachers are assigned to schools and classrooms within a district. They must ensure that less-qualified teachers are assigned to a range of students, not primarily assigned to teach poor and minority children.

# INVOLVEMENT



## Involving parents

Research shows that parent involvement is a key factor in school improvement. In Title I schools, the principal is required to involve parents in certain decisions that affect the school. These include:

- Developing a parent involvement policy
- Developing the school's Title I program, including participating in major decisions such as whether to use funds to reduce class size or to adopt a particular program for the school
- Evaluating the success of the Title I program
- Developing training for parents on the state's standards, on testing and other assessments, and on monitoring their children's progress
- Developing training for school staff on how to work with parents as equal partners

In schools that have not made AYP, parents must be involved in creating a school improvement plan. The plan must include strategies for effective parent involvement throughout the school.

NCLB also mandates parent involvement at district and state levels.

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## For more information

No Child Left Behind:  
[www.nochildleftbehind.gov](http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov)

U.S. Department of Education:  
[www.ED.gov](http://www.ED.gov)

Pennsylvania Department of Education: [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us)

Pennsylvania's "School Report Cards": [www.paprofiles.org](http://www.paprofiles.org)

Other NCLB school/district information: [www.SchoolResults.org](http://www.SchoolResults.org)

National PTA: [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

National Network of Partnership Schools: [www.partnership-schools.org](http://www.partnership-schools.org)

Education Trust: [www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org)

"Using NCLB to Improve Student Achievement: An Action Guide for Community and Parent Leaders," Public Education Network, 2002. To order a printed copy or download a free copy: go to [www.publiceducation.org](http://www.publiceducation.org), or call 202.628.7460.

"No Child Left Behind: What's in it for Parents," Anne T. Henderson, Parent Leadership Associates, 2002. To order a printed copy or download a free copy, in English or Spanish, go to [www.centerforparentleadership.org/products.htm](http://www.centerforparentleadership.org/products.htm), or call 859.233.9849 ext. 229. Check their website for other NCLB parent resources.