



Understanding adequate yearly progress in Alaska public schools

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the cornerstone of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Under the law, schools and school districts are held accountable for showing progress in the percentage of students who score proficient on assessments in language arts and math. The national goal is that all students will be proficient by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

Who is tested?

Alaska students in grades 3 through 10 take the state's standards-based assessments in reading, writing and math. The reading and writing scores are combined to produce a single language arts score for NCLB.

About 75,000 of Alaska's 130,000 public school children are assessed each year for NCLB. More than 98 percent of students in grades 3 through 10 who are enrolled for the full year are assessed each year.

Students with disabilities take the same assessments as other children, although some children with disabilities receive accommodations such as having a scribe write the answers because the child can't hold a pencil. Up to 1 percent of children enrolled in grades 3 through 10 are allowed to take an alternate assessment. They are children with significant cognitive disabilities; teachers administer an assessment to them based on academic tasks.

Alaska students with limited English proficiency who are in their first year in the United States do not have to participate in the NCLB assessments in reading and writing; the results for math also can be excluded. After their first year in the United States, Alaska students with limited English proficiency must take the assessments. They may receive accommodations such as being allowed to ask for clarifications of directions.

How is accountability measured?

Schools and districts are held accountable for student scores in language arts and math and for their students' participation rate in taking the assessments. They also are held accountable in a category called "other," which is the graduation rate for schools with a 12th grade and the attendance rate for other schools.

Here is a breakdown of the 41 categories of accountability:

Assessed students are categorized in ten ways: schoolwide and in the nine subgroups of African-American, Alaska Native/American Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Multi-Ethnic, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and Limited English Proficient Students.

Multiply four fields -- language arts scores, math scores, assessment-participation rate, and graduation rate-- by the ten ways to categorize students and you have 40 categories of accountability. The 41st category is the attendance rate for schools that don't have grade 12.

Subgroups in a school or district must be of a certain minimum size, known as the "N-size," to be included in NCLB accountability. The reason is that assessment scores of small enrollments aren't statistically significant. Schools and districts must have at least 26 students in a subgroup before that subgroup's scores are reported for NCLB. The exception is the graduation rate: Schools must have at least three students in the subgroup before that subgroup's scores are reported for NCLB.

The targets, which NCLB calls "annual measurable objectives," for the tests taken in April 2012 in Alaska are:

- 82.88 percent of assessed students schoolwide and in the nine subgroups must achieve a score of proficient in language arts.
- 74.57 percent of assessed students schoolwide and in the nine subgroups must achieve a score of proficient in math.
- 95 percent of eligible students schoolwide and in the nine subgroups must achieve a participation rate of 95 percent.
- 85 percent attendance rate schoolwide; or, if a school includes a 12th grade, an 85 percent graduation rate or improvement of 2 percentage points from the previous year, schoolwide and in the nine subgroups.

Over time, the targets for language arts and math will go up, reaching 100 percent in 2013-2014.

School Year	Annual Measurable Objective for Language Arts	Annual Measurable Objective for Mathematics
2001-02	64.03%	54.86%
2002-03	64.03 %	54.86 %
2003-04	64.03 %	54.86 %
2004-05	71.48 %	57.61 %

2005-06	71.48 %	57.61 %
2006-07	71.48 %	57.61 %
2007-08	77.18 %	66.09 %
2008-09	77.18 %	66.09 %
2009-10	77.18 %	66.09 %
2010-11	82.88 %	74.57 %
2011-12	82.88 %	74.57 %
2012-13	94.28 %	91.53 %
2013-14	100%	100 %

Schools can make AYP and yet not meet the target through a provision called “safe harbor.” Under safe harbor, schools and districts make AYP if the percentage of students (schoolwide or in subgroups) who are nonproficient has declined by at least 10 percent from the previous year. This refers to percentage, not percentile points. An example: In a school, 60 percent of students last year were nonproficient. Ten percent of 60 percent is 6 percent. So if 54 percent (60 minus 6) of students this year are nonproficient, the school has made safe harbor, even if the proficiency target hasn’t been met. Also, the school or district must meet the target for the attendance rate or graduation rate.

What are the consequences for not making adequate progress?

Under NCLB, schools on the “did not make AYP” list are said be needing improvement, or in “improvement status.”

Schools on the list for the first time are called Level 1 schools; for the second consecutive year, Level 2; for the third consecutive year, Level 3; for the fourth consecutive year, Level 4; and for the fifth and further consecutive years, Level 5.

Consecutive years of failing to make AYP are based on not meeting the target in the same subject area (language arts or math) for consecutive years. Once a school has reached Level 2, it must meet AYP targets for two consecutive years to be removed from the list of schools that need improvement.

The consequences for schools that need improvement depend on whether they receive Title I (federal anti-poverty) funds or not. Title I schools face more consequences than other schools. A chart that lists the consequences is at: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/nclb/SchoolImprovement.html>. It is also contained in the media packet.

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