

Questions & Answers about No Child Left Behind

- 2004 Update •

What is The No Child Left Behind Act?

In January 2002, President Bush signed the “The No Child Left Behind Act.” It reauthorized the existing Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NCLB made the most sweeping changes in federal law regarding public schools in nearly 40 years.

What are the goals of the law?

NCLB includes significant new accountability measures for all public schools. It is based on the ambitious goal that *ALL* children will be proficient in reading and math by 2014. By 2006, Missouri must develop new, *annual* tests in reading and math for grades 3-8 to measure students’ academic progress. The law requires that all children be taught by “highly qualified” teachers. The law also emphasizes improving communication with parents and making all schools safer for students.

Does NCLB apply to all schools?

Yes. Some of the provisions of NCLB apply only to schools that receive federal Title I funds. These funds support additional educational services for children from low-income families. Approximately 60 percent of all the public school buildings in Missouri receive Title I funds. NCLB, however, specifically requires each state to have a “single system of accountability,” with uniform standards for ALL students in ALL public schools.

Does NCLB apply to charter schools?

Yes. Charter schools are public schools. For NCLB accountability purposes, charter schools are treated like all other public schools.

What is “adequate yearly progress” (AYP)?

This is one of the essential elements of NCLB and probably the most complicated. To achieve the goal of all children being “proficient” (as defined by each state) by 2014, all public schools and districts must make satisfactory improvement each year toward that goal. Based on criteria included in NCLB, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has established specific annual targets for AYP in communication arts and math.

Following are Missouri’s AYP goals for 2003 through 2005. These figures show the combined percentage of students who must score at the “proficient” or “advanced” levels on the MAP in order for a school or district to achieve AYP. These targets apply to all subgroups of students listed in the next question.

AYP Targets	2003	2004	2005
Communication Arts	19.4%	20.4%	38.8%
Mathematics	9.3%	10.3%	31.1%

Missouri’s “starting points” for determining the annual AYP targets were based on 2002 MAP scores and the overall student proficiency rate in the school at the 20th percentile of total public school enrollment.

What subgroups are accountable for AYP?

Each school and district is assessed to determine if it has achieved AYP for all students in communication arts and math. In addition, each of the subgroups listed below is required to meet AYP goals, unless there are 30 or fewer students in the subgroup. For the IEP and LEP subgroups, there must be 50 or fewer students in the group.

- Asian & Pacific Islander
- Black
- Hispanic
- American Indian
- White
- Free/Reduced lunch
- IEP (Special education)
- LEP (Limited English proficiency)
- Other/Non-response

What is “Level Not Determined” (LND)?

Schools must make sure that at least 95 percent of the students in every subgroup are included in the MAP testing. If the 95 percent threshold is not met, that group cannot meet AYP, regardless of the subgroup’s overall scores. Missouri uses the term “Level Not Determined” (LND) to describe students who did not take the appropriate MAP tests or who did not make a valid attempt to complete a test. Thus, if any subgroup’s “LND” number exceeds 5 percent, that group will not meet AYP.

What are the consequences of not achieving AYP?

NCLB spells out an array of consequences for schools and districts that repeatedly fail to meet the AYP goals. Any school that fails to achieve AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject area will be identified by the state as “needing improvement.” Initially, a school that does not make AYP for two consecutive years must offer students the opportunity to transfer to another school within the district. After a third year, schools must offer “supplemental services” (such as tutoring) for students. Schools that do not show adequate progress after five years may be forced to take tough “corrective action” such as replacing school personnel or extending the school year.

These penalties do not apply to non-Title 1 schools. In addition, the “transfer option” will not apply in many of Missouri’s small school districts because there is only one building serving each grade level.

Will the MAP tests be eliminated?

No. The format of the current MAP exams will have to be adjusted so that less hand-scoring is required and to reduce the expense involved with testing large numbers of students every year. Committees of Missouri educators are now determining academic content that will be included in the assessments at each grade level. These “grade-level expectations” will help define the content of the new tests.

As a result of state law enacted in 2004, state education officials must assure that the standards and expectations of the MAP program do not exceed the standards used in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams, which states are now required to use under NCLB. The state has until 2006 to make the necessary adjustments in MAP standards.

Will NCLB override state standards?

No. The Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) is the state’s accreditation system for school districts. Through the MSIP standards (first adopted in 1990), the State Board of Education has already established school-improvement policies similar to those included in NCLB. The State Board of Education accredits *districts*, not individual buildings. NCLB focuses *primarily* on building-level performance and accountability. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) intends to incorporate the requirements of NCLB into the accreditation standards, to the degree possible, so that there will be “one set of rules” for Missouri school districts.

How will AYP be incorporated into state standards?

The 2006-07 academic year will mark the beginning of the “4th cycle” of MSIP accreditation reviews for Missouri school districts. The revised MAP assessments will be required for the first time in the spring of 2006, and the results of those tests will be available for the first time in the fall of 2006. Therefore, state education officials are considering adding a performance indicator, based on AYP requirements, to the current MSIP performance standards. No decisions have been made yet about what form this performance indicator might take.

Is it possible for individual schools to not meet AYP goals while the district has been recognized by the state for outstanding performance?

Yes. This is likely to be one of the most disconcerting aspects of the federal law for teachers, parents and students. Through the MSIP process, the state accredits the school district as a whole. Individual buildings are evaluated according to the MSIP standards, but they do not receive separate accreditation ratings.

While school districts are accountable for making adequate yearly progress, the focus of NCLB is on individual buildings. The standards of the federal law are extremely high in that every subgroup of students must meet the specified AYP standard. Because of the different criteria used in the state’s accreditation system and those required under NCLB, it is quite likely that many school districts will have at least some buildings that do not meet AYP standards with certain groups of students.