

CURRENT NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND PROCESSES - USA (July 2006)

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law (2002) mandates that every USA state adopt comprehensive accountability systems for identifying and improving underperforming schools. The law redefines the federal government's role in kindergarten through to grade 12 education.

The aim of NCLB is to improve the performance of USA primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts and schools as well as providing parents more flexibility in choosing which schools their children will attend. Additionally, it promotes an increased focus on reading through two federally funded programs – Reading First and Early Reading First.

The major focus of NCLB is to provide all children with a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain high quality education. The law aims to have all students performing at proficient levels on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments in mathematics, reading and science by 2014.

The intent of NCLB is to close achievement gaps between students who are of different gender, belong to a minority group, have disabilities, are economically disadvantaged or have limited English proficiency.

The law covers all public schools in all states of the USA and some private schools. In order to receive federal aid states are required to:

- Assess student performance
- Disclose the results to the public
- Impose sanctions on schools and districts that fail to meet state-wide performance goals.

The No Child Left Behind Law is organised under ten titles.

Title I	Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
Title II	Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality teachers and Principals
Title III	Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students
Title IV	21 st Century Schools
Title V	Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs
Title VI	Flexibility and Accountability
Title VII	Indian, Native, Hawaiian and Alaska Education
Title VIII	Impact Aid
Title IX	General Provisions
Title X	Repeals, Redesignations and Amendments to other Statutes

Many of the requirements in NCLB are outlined in Title 1: Adequate Yearly Progress, paraprofessional requirements, accountability, sanctions for schools designated for improvement, standards and assessment, annual state report cards, professional development and parent involvement. It is intended to help ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach grade level proficiency. Title I funds help students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Services can include: hiring teachers to reduce class size, tutoring, computer labs, parental involvement activities, purchase

of materials and supplies, pre kindergarten programs and the hiring of teacher assistants or others.

A Title 1 school receives Title 1 money, the largest federal funding source for education. Title 1 funding is allocated on the basis of student enrolment, census, poverty and other data. The US Department of Education distributes these funds to State Education Authorities (SEA) that in turn distribute the funds to Local Education Agencies (LEA) or school districts.

Funding supports Title I school wide programs and targeted assistance schools, depending on the level of poverty in the school and how the school wants to function.

School wide programs have flexibility in using their Title I funds in conjunction with other funds in the school to upgrade the operation of the entire school.

Targeted assistance schools use Title I funds to focus on assisting the students most at risk of academic failure on state assessments.

NCLB addresses four principles:

- Accountability for student academic achievement
- Increased flexibility and local control of federal education dollars
- Expanded options for parents
- Implementation of scientifically proven programs and teaching methods.

Each state is responsible for deciding what their students should learn in each grade and develop their own rigorous academic standards for what a child should know in reading, maths and science. NCLB specifically prohibits any national testing or federally controlled curriculum.

States have flexibility as to what is tested and when but generally the performance of all students in grades 3 – 8 is assessed annually in maths and reading, tested twice in the elementary grades in science and then in reading, maths and science at least once in grades 10 – 12.

The annual testing regime includes computer based multi-choice questions, work samples and written tests. States had until the 2005–2006 school year to develop and implement their tests. Annual student progress and achievement is measured according to the state tests designed to match the curriculum and state standards. Each state's test results are compared to an independent benchmark called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) which is administered to a small sample of each state's 4th and 8th grade students in reading and maths each year. NAEP ensures through comparability that states do not set the bar too low on their standards and tests.

Assessment

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is an essential element of NCLB. AYP is not a value added or growth model measure of progress for individual students, but rather it requires cross-cohort comparisons of the percent of students meeting the proficiency standards this year compared to last year's percent proficient. If the percentage of proficient students for a district or school is not sufficiently greater than the previous year's percentage, then the school or district will have failed to meet AYP requirements. Sub groups are exempt from meeting AYP goals if there are 30 or fewer students in the sub group and with Special Education and Limited English

Proficiency groups there must be at least 50 students for them to be accountable for AYP. Each state determines what an adequate rate of progress is for each group.

Immediately after identification schools receive additional funding and/or technical support to improve performance. These schools are also required to develop a 2 year school accountability plan.

A Title 1 school that fails to make AYP for two consecutive years is designated 'in need of improvement – year 1' and receives specific consequences. For each subsequent year that a school fails to meet its AYP goals, the school's 'in need of improvement' status advances and the school faces additional consequences which include school transfer options for students, supplemental services, corrective action, restructuring (planning) and restructuring (implementation). After year 5, if a school fails to make AYP in subsequent years it continues to be classified 'in need of improvement' and must offer school transfer options and supplemental services.

A school is no longer considered 'in need of improvement' when it meets AYP for two consecutive years.

Non Title 1 schools that do not make AYP do not face sanctions, however these schools must amend their school accountability plans to indicate how they will improve.

Planning

State Educational Accountability Plan

The plans which detail how and under what timeline states planned to achieve full proficiency toward state academic content standards were due to the US Department of Education in 2003. The plans also addressed how states intended to close achievement gaps. States received a workbook to help simplify and guide the process of preparing and submitting their plans.

School Accountability Plan

Within three months of identification a Title 1 school must develop a school accountability plan in consultation with parents, school staff, district and outside experts. The school accountability plan must cover a two year period, incorporate strategies based on scientifically based research to address specific areas that cause failure and the selection of policies and practices concerning the school's core academic subjects that have the greatest capacity of raising student achievement to meet the state proficient level.

The school accountability plan must also include an assurance the school will spend not less than 10% of its Title 1 funds annually on professional development, establish annual measurable objectives for continuous and substantial progress to ensure that each sub group will meet proficiency by 2014, provide effective parent involvement and incorporate a teacher mentoring program to be implemented not later than the beginning of the next full school year following the identification for improvement.

Districts must review the plan using a peer review process within 45 days upon receiving the document and approve it if it meets the statutory requirements, ensure the school receives technical assistance if required and provide all students in the

school with the option to transfer to another public school not identified for improvement.

Reporting

At the commencement of every school year, the school district must notify each parent of a child attending a Title1 school the achievement level of the child on the state's tests. This information must be an individual descriptive and diagnostic report.

States must provide parents and the public with annual report cards on school district performance. Information on student achievement is disaggregated by sub groups.

Review

The No Child Left Behind law is up for renewal in 2007.

Key Documentation/ Website

All documents were accessed from the indicated websites during July 2006.

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/ayp/testingforresults.html>

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.ihtml?src=pb>

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/saa.html>

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbrefrence/index.html>

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/teachers/teachers.html>

http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/guide/guide_p10.html

For further information on No Child Left Behind refer to the detailed paper available on this website.