



How Many Schools and Districts Have Not Made Adequate Yearly Progress? Four-Year Trends

Key Findings

The Center on Education Policy (CEP) analyzed trends over four years in the number of schools and school districts that did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in raising student achievement under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Using data from the Consolidated State Performance Reports¹ submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by all 50 states and the District of Columbia, we calculated the percentage of schools and districts in the nation and in each state that did not make AYP based on testing in school years 2005-06 through 2008-09. An update to this report will be released early in 2011 and will include data from school year 2009-10.

Three key findings emerged from our analysis:

- **Schools.** One-third (33%) of the nation's schools did not make AYP in 2009. This marks an increase from 29% in 2006 but a decrease from 35% in 2008.
- **Districts.** More than one-third (36%) of the nation's school districts did not make AYP in 2009, up from 29% in 2006.
- **Variations within and between states.** The percentages of schools and districts that did not make AYP often fluctuated from year to year within the same state and varied greatly across states.

¹Available at <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/index.html>

Background

Among the most central and controversial provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act are those that hold schools and districts accountable for making adequate yearly progress in improving student achievement. To make AYP, a school or district must meet all of the following requirements each year:

- Reach state-determined objectives for the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level on state reading and math tests, not only for the entire school or district but also for each major subgroup of students (racial/ethnic groups, low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners)
- Test at least 95% of the students in the school or district and in each subgroup
- Meet state-set targets for the graduation rate in high schools, or for student attendance or another indicator in elementary and middle schools

If just one subgroup falls short of any of these requirements, the school or district will fail to make AYP. NCLB's "safe harbor" provision offers another chance, however, by allowing schools that missed the achievement objectives for a particular subgroup or for all students to make AYP if they have decreased the number of students scoring below proficient by at least 10% from the previous year; safe harbor can be used indefinitely, as long as the requirements are met each year. Schools and districts that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years are identified for improvement and must implement a set of interventions that become more severe over time.

States' annual objectives (the percentage of students that must score proficient) rise periodically until they culminate in 100% of students scoring proficient by 2014, as required by NCLB. While many states have chosen to increase these objectives at a steady pace, almost half the states have established "backloaded" trajectories that call for slighter rises in the early years of NCLB but much steeper gains in the last few years before 2014.² As the achievement objectives

²Center on Education Policy. (2008). *Many States Have Taken a "Backloaded" Approach to No Child Left Behind Goal of All Students Scoring "Proficient."* Washington, DC: CEP.

continue to rise, more schools and districts may fail to make AYP, unless they show sufficient gains among lower-achieving students to qualify for safe harbor.

The baseline used in this study to calculate the percentages of schools not making AYP was the total number of schools or districts that reported AYP results. This is a somewhat smaller number than the total number of schools or districts in the nation or a particular state because states may exempt certain schools from AYP determinations. Texas, which omits the largest number of schools from its AYP determinations, has chosen to exempt, among others, new schools that have existed for a year or less, schools that do not serve the grades tested by NCLB, short-term schools that are not attended by any students for more than a year, and schools with unusual circumstances.³ Other states may exempt schools for similar reasons.

Schools Not Making AYP

To see the effects of the AYP requirements over time, CEP collected data from the Consolidated State Performance Reports that states must submit to the U.S. Department of Education by December of each year. Data were gathered for school years 2005-06 (the earliest reports available to the public), 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 (the most recent reports available). These data are from the year in which students took the tests that form the basis of AYP. For example, a school that fell short of achievement objectives based on 2006-07 testing was identified as “not making AYP” in the summer or fall of 2007 and retained that status through school year 2007-08, or longer if it failed to make AYP again.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of schools that did not make AYP for the entire nation, out of the total number of schools that reported AYP results for a particular school year. Over the four-year period from 2005-06 to 2008-09, the percentage of schools not making AYP increased from 29% to 33%. The 2008-09 percentage represents a slight decrease, however, from the high mark of 35% in 2007-08.

³Texas Education Agency. (2009). *2009 AYP Guide and 2009 AYP Guide Highlights*, <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ayp/2009/index.html>.

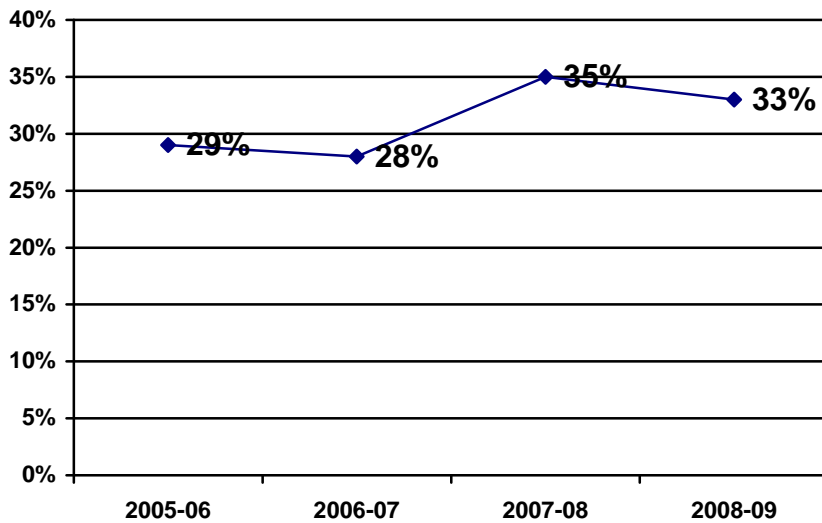
Figure 1. Percentage of schools that did not make AYP, school years 2005-06 through 2008-09

Figure reads: Twenty-nine percent of the schools across the nation that reported test data for school year 2005-06 for NCLB purposes did not make adequate yearly progress.

The Consolidated Performance Reports do not shed light on why the percentage of schools not making AYP has decreased slightly. One can speculate that NCLB's safe harbor option is a factor. Although no national data are available on how many schools have benefited from safe harbor, in some states safe harbor has allowed a significant number of schools to make AYP that otherwise would have fallen short.⁴

Table 1 provides state-by-state data on the percentages of schools that did not make AYP, out of the total number of schools in each state that reported AYP data.

As the table reveals, the percentage not making AYP often fluctuates from year to year in the same state and differs considerably from state to state. Fluctuations within the same state may not only reflect changes in student performance, but may also be attributable to such factors as a change in the state's test or cut scores for proficiency, rising achievement objectives, other state and federal policy changes, or year-to-year differences in student demographics. Variations between states may be less a result of differences in educational quality than of differences in test

⁴DeVise, D. (2008, April 7). "'Safe Harbor' Offers Shelter from Strict 'No Child' Targets," *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/06/AR2008040601998.html>.

difficulty, cut scores that define proficiency on state tests, annual objectives for the percentage scoring proficient, student demographics, and other factors. Indeed, states in which a high percentage of schools did not make AYP may have harder tests, higher cut scores, or higher annual objectives. These variations make it inadvisable to draw conclusions about student performance or educational quality based on AYP status.

Table 1. Percentage of schools in each state that did not make AYP, school years 2005-06 through 2008-09

State	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Alabama	11%	16%	16%	13%
Alaska	38%	34%	41%	44%
Arizona	33%	28%	27%	26%
Arkansas	39%	38%	42%	46%
California	34%	33%	48%	50%
Colorado	25%	27%	43%	44%
Connecticut	34%	32%	42%	41%
District of Columbia	85%	75%	77%	75%
Delaware	18%	29%	29%	34%
Florida	71%	66%	76%	77%
Georgia	21%	18%	20%	14%
Hawaii	65%	35%	58%	64%
Idaho	27%	73%	44%	34%
Illinois	18%	24%	32%	41%
Indiana	51%	48%	46%	50%
Iowa	16%	7%	31%	30%
Kansas	14%	12%	10%	12%
Kentucky	34%	22%	28%	38%
Louisiana	9%	12%	19%	9%
Maine	21%	30%	34%	35%
Maryland	23%	23%	17%	23%
Massachusetts	41%	48%	63%	62%
Michigan	14%	18%	27%	9%
Minnesota	31%	38%	49%	54%
Mississippi	16%	21%	14%	35%
Missouri	29%	46%	57%	63%
Montana	10%	10%	28%	27%
Nebraska	18%	12%	20%	12%
Nevada	47%	33%	40%	43%
New Hampshire	40%	42%	62%	54%
New Jersey	29%	26%	35%	35%
New Mexico	54%	55%	68%	68%
New York	29%	20%	16%	12%
North Carolina	56%	55%	69%	29%
North Dakota	9%	9%	37%	25%
Ohio	39%	38%	36%	39%

State	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Oklahoma	11%	12%	7%	11%
Oregon	32%	22%	37%	30%
Pennsylvania	18%	22%	28%	22%
Rhode Island	32%	21%	27%	19%
South Carolina	62%	63%	80%	50%
South Dakota	19%	18%	16%	21%
Tennessee	17%	13%	20%	20%
Texas	19%	9%	15%	5%
Utah	12%	23%	19%	17%
Vermont	24%	12%	37%	29%
Virginia	23%	26%	25%	28%
Washington	16%	35%	62%	58%
West Virginia	14%	19%	19%	20%
Wisconsin	4%	4%	7%	7%
Wyoming	15%	6%	24%	27%
<i>United States</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>28%</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>33%</i>

Table reads: Based on tests administered in the 2005-06 school year, 11% of the schools in Alabama that reported test data for NCLB purposes did not make AYP. This percentage increased to 16% based on tests administered in school year 2006-07.

Districts Not Making AYP

The AYP requirements for school districts are similar to those for schools. A district can fail to make AYP even if all of its schools make AYP. This happens because some districts are held accountable for the performance of student subgroups that are too small to count toward AYP status at the school level.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of districts in the nation that did not make AYP for each of the four years analyzed, out of the total number of districts reporting AYP data. These percentages have risen steadily from 29% in school year 2005-06 to 36% in school year 2008-09.

Figure 2. Percentage of school districts that did not make AYP, school years 2005-06 through 2008-09

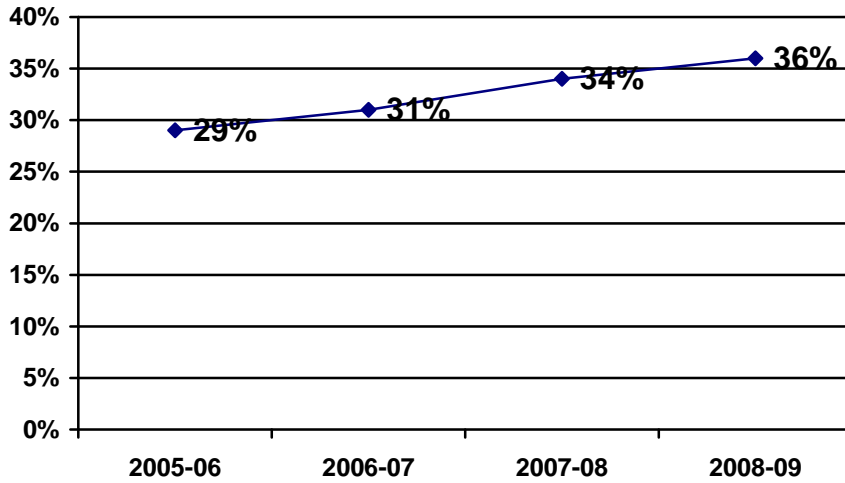


Figure reads: Twenty-nine percent of the school districts across the nation that reported test data for school year 2005-06 for NCLB purposes did not make adequate yearly progress.

Table 2 displays the state-by-state percentages of districts that did not make AYP, out of the total number of districts in each state that reported AYP data. These percentages vary from year to year in the same state and differ greatly across states for the same reasons as the school-level percentages do.

Table 2. Percentage of districts in each state that did not make AYP, school years 2005-06 through 2008-09

State	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Alabama	0%	1%	1%	2%
Alaska	54%	44%	50%	57%
Arizona	39%	42%	39%	39%
Arkansas	2%	18%	16%	10%
California	37%	47%	60%	64%
Colorado	40%	43%	58%	54%
Connecticut	19%	19%	74%	32%
Delaware	11%	32%	32%	37%
Florida	100%	100%	97%	100%
Georgia	65%	61%	70%	60%
Idaho	48%	73%	57%	55%
Illinois	23%	28%	39%	49%
Indiana	27%	21%	16%	17%
Iowa	4%	2%	10%	10%

State	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Kansas	12%	11%	8%	11%
Kentucky	56%	47%	40%	57%
Louisiana	39%	NA	NA	56%
Maine	0%	5%	4%	1%
Maryland	12%	71%	67%	84%
Massachusetts	64%	70%	78%	79%
Michigan	0%	3%	10%	36%
Minnesota	46%	47%	58%	61%
Mississippi	48%	69%	51%	89%
Missouri	38%	63%	73%	73%
Montana	16%	15%	32%	32%
Nebraska	29%	21%	34%	19%
Nevada	12%	6%	6%	35%
New Hampshire	32%	31%	44%	48%
New Jersey	13%	7%	15%	16%
New Mexico	76%	74%	46%	53%
New York	45%	27%	7%	5%
North Carolina	97%	97%	100%	90%
North Dakota	11%	14%	39%	23%
Ohio	68%	70%	48%	52%
Oklahoma	19%	14%	7%	12%
Oregon	63%	51%	59%	53%
Pennsylvania	5%	9%	8%	7%
Rhode Island	39%	33%	37%	22%
South Carolina	100%	100%	100%	100%
South Dakota	4%	3%	11%	6%
Tennessee	7%	10%	9%	17%
Texas	13%	11%	32%	17%
Utah	15%	17%	14%	13%
Vermont	26%	17%	39%	27%
Virginia	37%	55%	57%	55%
Washington	25%	50%	72%	69%
West Virginia	91%	91%	93%	95%
Wisconsin	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Wyoming	10%	0%	8%	8%
<i>United States</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>34%</i>	<i>36%</i>

Table reads: Based on tests administered in the 2005-06 school year, 54% of the schools in Alaska that reported test data for NCLB purposes did not make AYP. This percentage decreased to 44% based on tests administered in school year 2006-07.

Note: The District of Columbia and Hawaii are omitted from the table because these entities essentially have only one school district.

NA = Data not available

Conclusion

About one-third of the nation's schools failed to make AYP in school year 2008-09, the most recent year for which data were available. This represents an increase since 2005-06 but a slight decrease from 2007-08. This decrease could be the result of improved achievement but may also indicate that more schools and districts are benefiting from the safe harbor option. The national percentage of *districts* not making AYP has risen at a modest rate each year since 2005-06 and reached 36% by the end of school year 2008-09.

Because state objectives for percentages proficient will continue to rise—often quite steeply—in the next four years, one might expect the share of schools and districts not making AYP to grow quickly. This growth could be tempered to an unknown degree, however, by the safe harbor option.

Research by CEP and other organizations has highlighted the shortcomings of the AYP-based accountability system in identifying schools with the greatest academic needs and providing useful information for improving teaching and learning. In its Blueprint for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Obama Administration has proposed eliminating AYP in favor of a new mechanism intended to measure student and school growth more comprehensively. The Center on Education Policy has recommended allowing states that adopt common core state standards and assessments to move away from federal AYP requirements and experiment with different accountability systems.⁵ Swift action in 2011 on the long-awaited reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act would provide an opportunity to rethink and replace a flawed AYP-based system.

⁵Center on Education Policy. (2010). *Better Federal Policies Leading to Better Schools*. Washington, DC: CEP.

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