



## **A Toolkit for Communicating about Adequate Yearly Progress**

Under the “No Child Left Behind” Act

Compiled by Ohio School Boards Association and distributed as part  
of the OSBA No Board Member Left Behind program

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Dear Public Education Stakeholder:

We hope this Toolkit For Communicating About Adequate Yearly Progress helps you get the word out about the important federal legislation known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

This document provides educational professionals, administrators, parents and communities with relevant and reliable information on adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements and how AYP relates specifically to Ohio schools, as well as how to communicate school building results to a variety of audiences.

The free toolkit also provides you with a communications template for sharing AYP results at the local and intermediate school district levels.

The toolkit is available online on the OSBA Web site as an html file at: [www.osba-ohio.org/ayptoolkit.html](http://www.osba-ohio.org/ayptoolkit.html) or a downloadable Microsoft Word file at: [www.osba-ohio.org/ayptoolkit.doc](http://www.osba-ohio.org/ayptoolkit.doc).

For the latest information on No Child Left Behind, please visit the Ohio School Boards Association Web site: [www.osba-ohio.org](http://www.osba-ohio.org), or the Ohio Department of Education Web site: [www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/).

Again, we hope you find this information valuable. Good luck to all of you as you continue to communicate AYP to your constituencies.

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# Using this toolkit to communicate about adequate yearly progress

## Planning your communication

- As you plan to communicate about adequate yearly progress (AYP), consider these questions:

What are your communication goals?

Who are your audiences?

What are the key messages you need to convey?

What vehicles will reach these audiences?

What timeframe will you follow?

Who will ensure the plan is carried out?

How will you know if people understood?

- Invite parents and community members in to discuss what AYP and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mean for your district, the challenges they present and what you're doing to improve achievement for all students.
- By communicating early and often with your parents, community and the media, you'll take the surprise out of AYP, create understanding about what schools are doing to comply and generate support for the work that needs to be done.
- When explaining complex programs like AYP and NCLB, face-to-face communication works best. This allows for two-way discussion and is more likely to result in messages being understood. Use the toolkit's glossary of terms on page 24 to aid in the community's understanding of these issues.

## Creating your key messages

**See the toolkit's key messages section, page 9.**

- Consider the major points of AYP and NCLB.
  - How do they fit with Ohio's high standards for student achievement?
  - How do they impact your schools?
- Work with your administrators and staff to:
  - Identify messages connecting AYP and NCLB to the goals/mission of your school district.
  - Identify what is challenging about AYP and NCLB for your school district.
  - Decide how you will meet these challenges, including new initiatives and policies.
  - Develop key talking points about the progress of your school district.
- Assume your audiences have little or no information about AYP and NCLB.

- Develop concise, clear messages. Don't overwhelm your audience with technical or complex details.
- Determine how you will pay for the materials, meetings and other ways you will communicate about AYP and NCLB. Partners (like Chambers of Commerce, service clubs or associations) may be willing to share resources.

## Determining audiences and vehicles

**See the Toolkit's communication strategies section, page 9.**

- A Business Roundtable national poll in 2000 found that Americans rely on teachers and other parents for credible information about schools. About 42% chose teachers as the most reliable source of information. That's why teachers and parents are likely to rank high on your local communication plan.
- Consider forming teams of AYP and NCLB communicators that include a business/community representative.
- Work with the education committee of your Chamber of Commerce to host an information session for business leaders on AYP and NCLB.
- Partner with your Chamber of Commerce to co-sponsor community briefings.
- Put information about AYP and NCLB in the Chamber of Commerce newsletter. **See the sample article in this toolkit, page 17.**
- Education coalitions, parent-teacher organizations, the faith community and other community groups are natural partners in communicating about AYP and NCLB. Many of them can provide information, schedule speakers and coordinate special sessions.
- The focus on subgroup performance in AYP and NCLB means that groups representing the minority populations in your community will have a special interest in this law. Contact leaders of any minority-owned businesses, media and organizations, including the faith community, to help you reach parents and community members.

- Many school systems hold community forums, produce publications, meet with advisory groups and

coordinate with the news media to communicate important information. Use materials provided in this toolkit to include AYP and NCLB in these established communications vehicles.

### **Developing your communication plan**

**See the toolkit's communication plan ideas, page 19.**

- A suggested communication plan is provided in this toolkit. Local teams will want to tailor the plan for their communities. By tailoring the plan, local teams can identify additional audiences, determine what communication vehicles can be used and connect messages about AYP and NCLB to the goals of their school district.
- Videotape your superintendent, board president or other credible local person talking about how your system will meet the challenges of AYP and NCLB. Use this short video clip to start discussion sessions. Consider putting it on your Web site along with other AYP information.
- Combine sample materials included in this toolkit with your key messages to reach your audiences.
- Link your school district's Web site to the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) No Child Left Behind pages at [www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/). The site includes a number of helpful resources in addition to links to the law, Ohio's academic standards, highly qualified teacher requirements, parents information, links to other sites and information on the new federal act.

### **Broadening your communication efforts**

**See the toolkit's sample parent letter, page 16.**

- The AYP release will be a good time to provide more information about other aspects of NCLB and your local report card.
- Title I schools have specific requirements for notification of parents about specific items. Make sure these schools are complying with the requirements.
- The U.S. Department of Education is still determining final rules and regulations for implementing NCLB. That's one reason why the NCLB "Frequently Asked Questions" page is constantly being updated. Regularly check ODE's Web site for updates.

### **Evaluating your communication activities**

- Some local school systems and education partners conduct surveys of public and parent views on education. Consider adding a question regarding understanding of the federal legislation. This might be a good addition to your Web site.
- Tracking calls, e-mail contacts and evaluation form results from meetings and other sessions can help you gauge understanding of the issues.
- Requiring local school improvement plans/continuous improvement plans to include AYP and NCLB communications may help ensure that principals and school improvement teams are doing their part to communicate about them.

### **For more information about AYP/NCLB**

- OSBA's No Board Member Left Behind Web page: [www.osba-ohio.org/NCLB.html](http://www.osba-ohio.org/NCLB.html).
- Official NCLB Web site: [www.nclb.gov](http://www.nclb.gov).
- NCLB newsletter: To subscribe, send an e-mail to: [listproc@inet.ed.gov](mailto:listproc@inet.ed.gov) and write the following: "subscribe NoChildLeftBehind your first name your last name"
- Learning First Alliance Web site: [www.learningfirst.org/esea-related-resources.html](http://www.learningfirst.org/esea-related-resources.html).
- The Achiever-biweekly NCLB newsletter: [www.nclb.gov/Newsletter/index.html](http://www.nclb.gov/Newsletter/index.html).
- Free NCLB desktop reference (181 pages), go to: [www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reference.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reference.pdf).
- Public Education Network (PEN) Newsblast has regular NCLB updates. To subscribe: [www.publiceducation.org/tools-pubs.asp](http://www.publiceducation.org/tools-pubs.asp) then click on NewsBlast.
- *Education Week on the Web* features NCLB articles: [www.edweek.org/ew/](http://www.edweek.org/ew/).
- Education Trust Web site offers NCLB resources: [www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/ESEA](http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/ESEA).
- Let OSBA know what other information you need to better communicate about AYP and NCLB. Contact Scott Ebright, APR, at [s\\_ebright@osba-ohio.org](mailto:s_ebright@osba-ohio.org).

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# **What is adequate yearly progress ?**

## What is adequate yearly progress?

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is one of the cornerstones of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Making AYP means increasing student achievement incrementally over a 12-year period with the goal of 100% proficiency. In Ohio, AYP will be one measure of student success within Ohio’s existing accountability plan. AYP is a measure of whether districts and each building in a district, meet the goals for proficiency on statewide assessments.

There are two ways schools can meet AYP. The first way is by meeting the annual goals on student assessments in reading and math. The second way is by meeting the requirements for the “safe harbor provision.” In order for the building or school district to make AYP, the law requires that subgroups of students achieve the proficiency goals. These subgroups include: students with disabilities, racial/ethnic minorities, and limited English proficiency and economically disadvantaged students.

## How to meet AYP:

1) Starting with the spring 2003 proficiency tests, to meet AYP each school must meet the baseline scores in reading and math at each grade level. (See chart on this page.) At least 95% of the school’s population and each statistically relevant subgroup must take the tests. Buildings and districts must reach one additional academic indicator. Elementary and middle schools must achieve an attendance rate of **93%**. High schools must achieve a graduation rate of **73.6%**.

2) Safe harbor provision: Even if a building or district fails to meet the above requirements, it may still meet AYP by reducing the percent of students who did not make AYP last year by at least 10% AND by meeting the graduation target for high school and attendance target for middle and elementary schools.

Ohio has set the baseline scores and the timeline along which increases in achievement are expected to occur. Those increases in achievement are known as “intermediate goals.” Intermediate goals will be reached in 2004–05, 2007–08, 2010–11, 2011–12 and 2012–13. Because Ohio is in the process of going from proficiency to achievement testing, specific percentages have not been assigned to the intermediate goals. Instead, as new assessments are implemented, the baseline and intermediate goals will be recalculated.

The following table shows the starting baseline scores based on Ohio state test results:

	<b>Proficient</b>
4th Math	35.9%
4th Reading	40.5%
6th Math	36.8%
6th Reading	36.0%
9th Math	53.1%
9th Reading	78.0%

To avoid uncharacteristic “swings” in which a single school’s scores would negatively impact its AYP status, schools can average up to three years of student data to determine the percentage of students scoring proficient in math and reading.

AYP applies to each district and school in the state; however, NCLB sanctions for schools that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years only apply to those districts and schools that receive Title I funds. In Ohio, a timeline of consequences based on the state accountability system applies to districts and buildings even where no Title I funding is received. Some consequences only apply to districts and/or buildings that receive Title I funds.

## What happens if AYP goals are not met?

Under Ohio’s accountability plan, districts and schools that do not make AYP in the first year face no sanctions.

### District consequences

If the school district or building does not meet AYP goals for two consecutive years, the district:

- Will develop a three-year continuous improvement plan for the district or building and shall hold a public hearing on the plan.
- Will issue written notification to parents in any school building that does not meet AYP goals, including actions being taken to improve performance.
- Will offer school choice to students enrolled in schools that do not meet AYP. The district will spend up to 20% of Title I, Part A funds to transport students exercising school choice. If 20% is insufficient to provide transportation to all students, the district shall give priority to the lowest income, lowest achieving students (*for Title I districts/buildings only*).

If the district does not meet AYP goals for three years or more, the district:

- Will continue to implement the continuous improvement plan.
- Will provide school choice and transportation, and supplemental education services. The district shall spend at least 5% of Title I, Part A funds to pay for

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Percent</b>
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supplemental services and at least 5% to pay for school choice transportation (*for Title I districts/buildings only*).

If the district does not meet AYP goals for four years or more, the department will take at least one of the following actions:

- Withhold a portion of the district's Title I, Part A funds,
- Direct the district to replace key personnel,
- Institute a new curriculum,
- Establish alternate governance for individual buildings, OR
- Appoint a trustee to manage the district instead of the superintendent and board of education.

Title I districts and buildings must continue to offer school choice and supplemental services.

If a district does not meet AYP goals for five years or more, the department:

- Will continue to monitor the implementation of the corrective action chosen in year four.

Title I districts and buildings must continue to offer school choice and supplemental services.

If a school district does not make AYP for six years or more, the department:

- Will take another corrective action as listed in year four, but one that is different from the first action chosen.

Title I districts and buildings will continue to offer school choice and supplemental services.

At any time, the department may establish a state intervention team to evaluate a school district.

### **Building consequences:**

If a school building does **not** meet AYP goals for two years in a row, the district:

- Will develop a three-year continuous improvement plan for the building and shall hold a public hearing on the plan.
- Will issue written notification to parents in any school building that does not meet AYP goals, including actions being taken to improve performance.
- Will offer school choice to the students enrolled in the building. The district will spend up to 20% of Title I, Part A funds to transport students exercising school choice. If 20% is insufficient to provide transportation to all students, the district shall give priority to the lowest income, lowest achieving students (*for Title I districts/buildings only*).

If a school building does **not** meet AYP goals for three years in a row, the district:

- Must continue to implement the continuous improvement plan for the building.
- Will provide school choice and transportation, and supplemental education services. A list of state-approved supplemental education service providers is available from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The district shall spend at least 5% of Title I, Part A funds to pay for supplemental services and at least 5% to pay for school choice transportation.
- Total Title I allocation to cover school choice and supplemental education services is no more than 20% of Title I funds (*for Title I districts/buildings only*).

If a school building does **not** meet AYP goals for four years in a row, the district:

- Must continue to offer school choice and supplemental services as outlined above (*for Title I districts/buildings only*).
- Must select one of the following options for the building:

Institute a new curriculum that is consistent with the statewide academic standards;

Decrease the degree of authority the building has to manage its own operations;

Appoint an outside expert to make recommendations for improving the academic performance of the building;

Extend the length of the school day or school year;

Replace the building principal or other key personnel; or

Reorganize the administrative structure of the building.

If a school building does **not** meet AYP goals for five years in a row, the district:

- Must continue to offer school choice and supplemental services as outlined above (*for Title I districts/buildings only*).
- Shall develop a plan for the building to be implemented in the following school year which shall include at least one of the following:
- Reopen as a community school;
- Replace personnel;
- Contract with a nonprofit or for-profit entity to operate the building;
- Turn operation of the building over to the department;

- Other significant restructuring of the building's governance.

If a school building does **not** meet AYP for six years in a row, the district:

- Must continue to offer school choice and supplemental services as outlined above (*for Title I districts/buildings only*);
- Must implement the plan developed in year five, described above.

A district shall continue to offer school choice and supplemental education services until a building meets AYP goals for two consecutive school years.

### **How will AYP be announced by ODE?**

Since AYP is only one factor in Ohio's accountability system, it will be released as data included in the local report card. Report cards are due to be released on August 19, 2003.

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# Relating key messages about AYP

## Framing the NCLB issue

- Educators support the concept of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and will comply with this new law.
- We will continue to support Ohio's tradition of high academic standards while implementing NCLB because we believe that all children can learn.
- Having high expectations for our students is not new. But how our schools are measured in the work of all its students is different under this new federal law.
- NCLB is a 1,000+ page legal document and its ramifications aren't fully known.

## Facts about the AYP release

- Adequate yearly progress (AYP) reports under NCLB will be part of the Local Report Card and are scheduled to be released to schools on August 19, 2003 (this may not occur since House Bill 3 was not adopted by the General Assembly by press time).
- Subgroups will be included in reporting results.
- Local Report Cards will tell if schools have/have not met AYP.
- We need to be prepared to communicate in either instance since our community members will have questions about it.

## Key messages for release of AYP

- Ohio is a national leader in setting high achievement standards for its students.
- AYP is based on state test results, but our students are learning much more than what's measured on a single test on a single day.
- We have district and building plans to address improved student achievement, as required by state laws.
- We are using our school improvement plan to address our school improvement needs including those identified under NCLB.
- We're addressing the new NCLB requirements while we continue — in the midst of budget cuts and labor shortages, to do what's best for students.
- We'll use all the resources available to us to help our students achieve.

- We can't do this alone. Maintaining high quality schools is a job for the entire community. We need your help in reaching these goals.
- We want parent and community input. Contact your building principal to get involved.

## Communication strategies for AYP release

- Take control of your communication early.
- Identify your target audiences (including staff, parents, community and the media).
- Communicate with them often.
- Avoid making district comparisons. (Don't brag if you met AYP. Don't make excuses if you didn't. Things can change quickly in the next AYP release.)
- Avoid making building comparisons. Each has its strengths and challenges. Note that school improvement is districtwide and building specific.
- Be proactive. Tell your story first.
  - This is how we're going to use the AYP report to be even better.
  - Here are the challenges/opportunities we face (include subgroups).
  - Here are the places we excel including our strengths and points of pride.
  - This is where we're going with the community's support.
- Inform school employees, unions, site councils, parent/teacher associations (PTAs), boosters and other members of the school family so they can carry the message.
- Remind school employees they are the most important public relations ambassadors for schools.
- Use your district's communication vehicles to reach audiences, including: newsletters, memos, notes, e-mail, lunch menus, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, school productions, key communicators, town hall meetings, Web site, cable TV, unions, PTA councils, staff meetings.
- Always include a contact number or e-mail address where people can get more information.
- Provide regular reports at your board meetings.
- Invite the community in to "see for themselves" what our children are learning.

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# Proactive communication for school leaders

**Note:** When speaking with parents, community leaders and the media, remember that there are no “failing schools.” This is **NOT** official language being used by anyone at the state or federal level and every effort needs to be made to correct use of that language by other educators, members of the media, community leaders, parents, etc. The schools “on the list” are those “in need of improvement” or are “under-performing.”

*It is important to note the law does not use the term ‘failing schools,’ according to Rod Paige, secretary of education. “In some cases, schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ may, in fact, be succeeding in some measures,” he said. “What’s important is that we know these schools are capable of getting better results for their students.”*

## Be proactive in your communication

Here are ways you can be proactive in your communication with staff, parents and community leaders:

- Explain that the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a list of schools that need improvement. See “What is adequate yearly progress?” in this toolkit on page 6.
- Remember to explain these reports to ALL school staff members including secretaries, bus drivers, custodians and food service staff. Local residents will seek out the opinions and knowledge of school staff at local grocery stores, churches, community events, parties and other informal settings.
- Tell school staff, students, parents and community leaders whether your building(s) expect(s) to be on the NCLB AYP list and the associated required actions **before** they read about it in the newspaper.
- You have a story to tell about the strengths and challenges of each school building and the steps that have been taken toward improving student achievement. Tell your school’s story **before** the media does through building newsletters, Web sites, message boards, and small group meetings with staff, parents and community leaders. Be sure to mention specific things the staff, students, parents and community members can do to help improve student achievement.

- Each principal may want to create a one-page written statement (your school’s story) that can be approved by the superintendent in advance of the release of AYP. This statement can be shared with staff, parents and community leaders. It can be included in newsletters. If approved, this statement can be faxed in response to media inquiries.
- Each principal may want to craft at least three key messages s/he wants people to remember about the school’s data. Ask yourself: “What’s the message here? How are we doing?” Make sure these messages are clear, concise and honest. Communicate them to staff, parents and community leaders.
- Do not refer to your school or to any others as “failing.” If educators use this word, others will think it is accurate. The schools “on the list” are those “needing improvement.”
- Meet with staff to brainstorm a list of specific things staff are doing/can do to help improve student achievement. Have your school improvement team send an encouraging memo and this list to all staff members. Every member of your school staff may want to sign this list showing their commitment to improving student achievement. The list can be shared in district newsletters or can be posted within the school building. Revisit the list at periodic staff meetings.
- Meet with parents to review the parent involvement policy (Title I schools) and brainstorm a list of specific things parents can do to help improve student achievement. Have your parent advisory board sign this list and distribute to other parents. Ask the parent advisory board to revisit the list and come up with ways to encourage parents to take action. Note that NCLB 115 STAT. 1503 lists the following parent responsibilities: “monitoring attendance, homework completion, television watching, volunteering in their child’s classroom, participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time.”
- Principals may want to identify and meet with key members of the neighborhood in which their school building is located. Brainstorm a list of things these neighbors can do to help. Ask one leader to spearhead this community group to ensure that action is taken.

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# Talking points for superintendents

## **What you should know about your district's results:**

- Exactly which (if any) school buildings in your district are on the adequate yearly progress (AYP) list of schools needing improvement.
- How many years in a row each building did not make AYP.
- What required actions are necessary for each school building.
- A general knowledge of current school improvement initiatives going on at each school building on the “needs improvement” list.
- A list of strengths for each school building on the “needs improvement” list.

## **The following are points you can make with parents, community leaders and media:**

Members of the media are eagerly awaiting the release of AYP. Extensive media coverage is inevitable.

The media will most likely contact school districts with a very high number of school buildings on the AYP list of schools needing improvement, or they will contact school districts with very few or no buildings on the list.

The reports will contain easy to reproduce lists of “winners” and “losers.”

Talk to reporters when they call. Remember they are just doing their jobs. Use this as an opportunity to educate the media and your community about the opportunities and challenges the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) presents. Keep your comments positive. Avoid making excuses, self-serving responses and comparisons to others. Avoid making district comparisons (don't brag if you make AYP).

### **Be sure to note:**

- NCLB calls for universal high performance on achievement tests for all students.
- Every state is required to define its own standards, testing requirements, and AYP targets within strict standards approved by the federal government.

- Some states that have been in violation of previous federal regulations may not have any schools on the AYP list of schools needing improvement.
- As with any new legislation that is sweeping and complex, it will take a couple of years to fully understand and implement what schools must do to comply.
- We are certain in future years adjustments will be made to NCLB to improve aspects of the law, since many details remain unclear at this time.
- We accept and acknowledge that AYP reports are one more added source of information to help schools improve.
- We'll factor the AYP report along with other achievement information into our existing school improvement process to ensure all of our schools are providing the best possible education for our children.
- We need good state policy to help schools meet AYP. We need to seek solutions to help schools reach the students who are hardest to educate.
- We have a local plan working with our buildings, district and intermediate school district to meet the challenges of NCLB.
- We need the state and federal government to realize that mandates without resources make reforms difficult to achieve. The state and federal budget are in deficit. Will resources be forthcoming as promised? Schools that need improvement also need additional resources.
- We intend to make progress “not excuses” — but we need resources to overcome our challenges.
- We invite the media, our parents and the community to “come in and see” what our students are learning. And, we encourage them to work with us as we continually improve our schools.

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# Questions and answers for building principals

## Prepare for the release of AYP reports

Anticipate questions your parents, community leaders and local media will ask. Talk with your superintendent about who should speak to the press BEFORE your building gets media calls.

**Note:** When speaking with parents, community leaders and the media, remember that there are no “failing schools.” This is **NOT** official language being used by anyone at the state or federal level and every effort needs to be made to correct use of that language by other educators, members of the media, community leaders, parents, etc. The schools “on the list” are those “in need of improvement” or are “underperforming.”

*It is important to note the law does not use the term ‘failing schools,’ according to Rod Paige, secretary of education. “In some cases, schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ may, in fact, be succeeding in some measures,” he said. “What’s important is that we know these schools are capable of getting better results for their students.”*

## What you should know about your building results:

1. Whether your school building receives Title I funding and if it’s on the adequate yearly progress (AYP) list of schools needing improvement.
2. How many years in a row your building did not meet AYP goals.
3. If your building is a Title I school, what required actions, if any, are necessary under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).
4. Knowledge of the current school improvement initiatives going on in your school building.
5. A list of strengths for your school building.

## Questions building principals may be asked:

**Q: Why is your building on/off the list when (fill in school name within or outside of your district) is on/off the list? Why did your school do so much better/worse than School B?**

A: I only have first-hand knowledge of my own school building and wouldn’t know about (fill in school name).

**Q: What changes will you be making as a result of the AYP report?**

A: Provide details of current and planned initiatives noting that improvement strategies have already been underway. Bring out strengths: “We have had a strong focus on mathematics, an area we have greatly improved upon. Now as we turn our attention to reading/language arts, we expect the same great results.”

**Q: Will you be making any staff changes as a result of this rating?**

A: No staff changes will be made as a direct result of this report. We will continue to base our staffing decisions on student needs, budget issues and a variety of other data we have gathered.

**Q: Your district just passed a large measure to pay for your new facility/facility improvements. What will you say to them now that you were found to be a school in need of improvement?**

A: We recognize we are a school in need of improvement based on AYP criteria. We also know the technology improvements, better heating and ventilation systems, and new state-of-the-art classrooms will have a positive impact on student achievement. The community’s funding for this measure is a critical part of our improvement process.

**Q: Why is it that your school building’s performance has received awards or received high marks under the state’s annual school and district report card system, yet the federal government has declared your school as needing improvement?**

A: We’re working hard to create the proper context for student learning and we’re doing a lot of things right. That’s evident by the awards and recognition our school has received. We will continue to use proven research-based methods to improve upon our results. And, we’ll ask our staff, parents and students to help us with those improvements.

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# Questions and answers for board members

The media will most likely contact school districts with a very high number of school buildings on the adequate yearly progress (AYP) list of schools in need of improvement, or they will contact school districts with very few or no buildings on the list.

**Q: Are you aware the federal government has identified \_\_ number of schools in your district as “in need of improvement”? What’s your reaction to this?**

A: Yes, I am aware of this. Our superintendent has briefed us on the AYP status of our buildings. As board members we are kept informed of our building’s state test scores and the work of the school improvement teams.

**Q: Why does your school district have \_\_ number of buildings on the list when X school district has none/many? Why did your school district do so much better/worse than that other school district?**

A: I only have first-hand knowledge of my own school district and don’t know about (fill in school name).

**Q: How have your parents reacted to the report cards that list several of your buildings as needing improvement?**

A: Our parents have always been concerned about student growth and learning, even before the report cards were issued. We continue to welcome their input and questions. We count on them to continue their support and involvement. It’s a critical part of our improvement process.

**Q: Your school district has no buildings on the AYP list of schools needing improvement. Why are you doing so much better?**

A: Every district faces its own unique issues and challenges. Our district is really not that different from any other public school district in the way that we all work hard to do the very best we can for all children.

**Q: What changes will you be making as a result of the new Ohio report cards that include AYP?**

A: Provide an overview of current and planned initiatives noting that improvement strategies have already been underway. Bring out strengths: “Our district has been heavily involved with school improvement strategies and that focus will become even stronger within school buildings that did not meet AYP targets.”

**Q: How will you respond to parents who want to know why your buildings need improvement?**

A: Whether our buildings met AYP is only one measurement — Ohio’s statewide test results in reading/language arts and math. We also are evaluated on the state performance indicators and a performance index score. We are already taking measures to improve in this area; however, our students are more than “test scores.” We evaluate our students in all sorts of ways beyond the state tests including student projects, oral assessments, and observations. We are proud of the accomplishments and successes our students have achieved.

**Q: Will you be making any staff changes as a result of this rating?**

A: Every school year, we base our staffing decisions on student needs, budget issues, and a variety of data we have gathered. That process will not change.

**Q: Your district just passed a large measure to pay for your new facility/facility improvements. What will you say to your community now that you have schools in need of improvement?**

A: We recognize we have (a) school building(s) in need of improvement based on AYP criteria. We also know that the technology improvements, better heating and ventilation systems, and new state-of-the-art classrooms will have a positive impact on student achievement. The community’s funding for this measure is a critical part of our improvement process.

**Q: Because your school building(s) has (have) not met AYP targets for 4(5) years in a row, which corrective actions will you be forced to take?**

A: Clearly the law requires us to take action, but we will not “react.” We will look carefully at each of our options within the required time frame. We will choose the action that best serves our children and is the right choice for each building.

**Q: We’ve spoken to superintendents in other districts who plan to take \_\_\_ action as a result of the AYP requirements for schools in need of improvement. Do you plan to do this, too?**

A: We know every district will continue to take action to improve student achievement in ways that best serve the needs of their children. We too will determine what actions will be best for our children within the required time frame.

-end-

# Tips for talking with the media

## General media considerations

**Note:** When speaking with parents, community leaders and the media, remember that there are no “failing schools.” This is **NOT** official language being used by anyone at the state or federal level and every effort needs to be made to correct use of that language by other educators, members of the media, community leaders, parents, etc. The schools “on the list” are those “in need of improvement” or are “under-performing.”

*It is important to note the law does not use the term ‘failing schools,’ according to Rod Paige, secretary of education. “In some cases, schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ may, in fact, be succeeding in some measures,” he said. “What’s important is that we know these schools are capable of getting better results for their students.”*

## Tips for talking with the media about AYP

- Prepare media packets and include facts, figures, and program information about your school. Include annual reports and/or other easy-to-understand publications. Have these materials on hand at all times.
  - Once you know the adequate yearly progress (AYP) status of your district and buildings, determine three key messages and prepare related talking points to make sure these messages are concisely and consistently presented to the media.
  - Include the board and staff as part of the communication team and make sure they have access to the talking points so everyone is communicating the same messages.
  - Hold media interviews in an active program location, not the superintendent’s or principal’s office. Let them see, firsthand, the student- and teacher-driven activities that are taking place in your building(s).
- Make sure all the information you share with the media and your various publics is factual, straightforward and consistent. Stick to the facts.
  - Establish an audience target before meeting with the media; get a clear message of who needs to hear the message to reach your goal.
  - Use language geared toward your target audience. Use analogies or school-based stories to get your message across.
  - Respond to your situation only; refrain from speculating or offering opinions about the results of other districts.
  - Answer each question and then be silent. Refrain from embellishing your comments and resist subtle pressure to chat about them.
  - Don’t dwell on the problem(s); emphasize what you are doing to improve a given situation(s).
  - If the media uses negative language, do not repeat it in your response. Be mindful of negative buzzwords such as “failing.”
  - If a negative question is asked, “bridge” your response to the message you want to convey.
  - Always remain positive. This is an opportunity to provide great clarity about what your district does and whom you serve.
  - If you have questions about communicating with the media or need assistance, contact the person in your district responsible for media relations, call your school district or contact the OSBA’s Scott Ebright, APR, at [s\\_ebright@osba-ohio.org](mailto:s_ebright@osba-ohio.org)

-end-

# Sample news release

ISSUED: August \_\_, 2003  
CONTACT: superintendent or  
communications coordinator:  
XXX/XXX-XXXX, ext. XXX

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Continuing high standards: Example Public Schools target student learning

“The goal of **Example Public Schools** is to prepare children to succeed in school and in life,” Example Public Schools Superintendent **NAME** said.

“We support Ohio’s tradition of high academic standards and school improvement while implementing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) — the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act,” **NAME** said.

NCLB was signed into law by President George W. Bush in Hamilton, Ohio in January 2002. States are required to “raise the bar” for adequate yearly progress (AYP) each year to meet the NCLB goal of having all students, including nine different subgroups of students, proficient in reading and math by the 2013–14 school year. Ohio’s accountability plan serves as the basis for calculating AYP in Ohio.

Under NCLB, it’s important for schools as a whole to meet target AYP goals. Also, all subgroups in a school must meet the target goals; if even one group does not meet the AYP target goals, the school will not make AYP. Schools receiving Title I funding, a federal program that helps fund schools in areas of economic need, could face sanctions under NCLB if the school does not make AYP for two or more years in a row. Sanctions increase in severity for every year a Title I school does not make AYP.

More than \_\_\_ % of **Example Public School** students in grades 3-10 demonstrated proficiency in reading and mathematics in the past two years. The percentage of students proficient in both reading and mathematics for student subgroups in third through 10th grades ranged from \_\_\_% to \_\_\_%.

**NAME** said the school district has several programs already in place to help every student achieve at higher proficiency levels. **LIST PROGRAMS AND OTHERS THAT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED.**

“Our district’s school improvement plan, developed as required under state law, addresses our school improvement needs, including those identified under NCLB,” **NAME** said.

**Example Public Schools** has experienced increased academic success under Ohio’s high standards and expects to continue to do so. “But it’s going to take every school administrator, teacher, student, parent and the community working together, especially in light of Ohio’s budget shortfall, to ensure no **Example Public School** student is left behind,” **NAME** said.

**Example Public Schools** encourages all community members, including parents, business leaders and retirees to get involved in helping students succeed.

For more information, contact: **NAME** at XXX/XXX-XXXX or send an e-mail to: \_\_\_\_\_, or go to the district’s Web site: www.\_\_\_\_\_

###

# Sample AYP parent letter for schools in second year of needing improvement

**Note:** If you are sending parent letters about schools being in the third year of needing improvement, adapt this model using the italicized paragraph.

## (Sample letter)

Dear Parent:

As you know, our school and school district are dedicated to providing all students with the educational foundation necessary to succeed in school and in life. To ensure your child's success, we have set high standards that are reflected in what is taught in our classrooms. While holding high expectations for our students is not new, the way our school and student achievement is measured and reported will be different under a new federal law known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

No Child Left Behind was signed into law on Jan. 8, 2002, in Hamilton, Ohio, by President George W. Bush. It represents the federal government's largest expansion and involvement in K-12 education. Two of the most prominent and highly publicized components of this new federal legislation include provisions of limited "school choice" and "supplemental education services" for students attending schools that have been identified as needing improvement for not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more years in a row. AYP is based on results on Ohio's standardized tests in reading and math. The following schools in our district have been identified as needing improvement: **LIST SCHOOLS**.

Under NCLB, students at the following schools, **LIST SCHOOLS**, may apply for transfer to designated schools within **SCHOOL DISTRICT** that have made AYP. If you exercise the option of transferring your child to schools making AYP within **DISTRICT** and your child is eligible, the school district has certain obligations to provide or pay for transportation to the new school.

*Students at schools identified as needing improvement for a third year are eligible to receive tutoring, or supplemental education services. Students at the following schools are eligible for these services: **LIST SCHOOLS**. These services are over and above those ordinarily provided in the regular classroom during the regular school day. Parents interested in this provision must choose a state-approved provider; contact the Ohio Department of Education for a list or visit its Web site at [www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/) and look for NCLB under "Sections & Initiatives." If you exercise this option and your child is eligible, the school must pay for these services.*

If you would like your child to be considered for transfer/supplemental services during the 2003–04 school year, please notify the school principal in writing as soon as possible so we can begin arrangements for the coming school year. You will be contacted to further discuss the specifics of your request. If you wish for your child to remain at his/her current school, no action on your part is required.

We want to continue serving your child, and we'll use all the resources available to us to help our students achieve. We are using our school improvement plan, developed as required by Ohio's law, to address our school improvement needs, including those identified under NCLB. But building and maintaining a high quality school is a job for the entire community, and we need your help in reaching these goals. We encourage you to provide input as we strive to help our students succeed now and in the future. To get involved with your school, contact **NAME** and **CONTACT INFORMATION**.

Sincerely,

-end-

## Sample article for school publications

### No Child Left Behind's impact on our school

Our school is dedicated to making sure all children succeed in school and in life. We're proud of programs like [CITE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HIGH STANDARDS OR ACHIEVEMENTS HERE] that help students at our school learn. But the way our school and student achievement is measured and reported will be different under the federal law known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). It's important for you to understand how this law affects our school and our students.

NCLB, signed into law by President George W. Bush in Hamilton, Ohio in January 2002, is the federal government's largest ever expansion into our local schools. While we support the concept of NCLB and will fully comply with this new law, it is very complicated and will require an enormous effort by our school, school district and state to implement.

Under NCLB, a measure known as adequate yearly progress (AYP) is used to report student progress on the state's reading and math tests. By the 2013-2014 school year, all students in Ohio are supposed to be successful on these tests, according to NCLB.

Each year, our school will receive a report card from the state that shows our AYP status. The report card will include students' scores for the entire school, but that's only part of the rating. The report card will also break students' scores into different subgroups, including race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, limited English proficiency (LEP) and economically disadvantaged students. Individual student scores will not appear on the report.

If our school does not make AYP in every category, does that mean our school is "failing"? Absolutely not! AYP is mostly based on state test results, and our students are learning much more than what's measured by a single test on a single day. It's important for parents to understand their child's day-to-day progress in the classroom.

### FOR NON-TITLE I SCHOOLS ONLY:

Some schools that do not make AYP may have to offer public school choice within the district, provide tutoring to students or face other sanctions as called for by NCLB. Schools facing those sanctions receive Title I funding; our school does not.

We are using our school improvement plan/continuous improvement plan, developed as required by Ohio's law, to address our school improvement needs, including those identified under NCLB. Our school is currently working on [LIST SPECIFIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS HERE] to make our school even better.

We can't do this alone. Maintaining high quality schools is a job for the entire community, and we need your help in reaching these goals. If you would like to get involved contact your building principal at [CONTACT INFORMATION].

### FOR TITLE I SCHOOLS ONLY:

Our school receives Title I funding. Title I is a federal program that provides resources to schools in areas of economic need. NCLB focuses on schools, like ours, that receive Title I funding.

Under NCLB, every school receiving Title I money is required to notify parents of their rights to request and receive the following information from the school:

- Professional qualifications of their child's teacher(s) including degrees and certifications held and whether the teacher is certified in the area he/she is teaching.
- Whether or not their child is receiving instruction by a paraprofessional, and if so, his/her qualifications. This applies to all instructional staff in the school, not just those paid with Title I funds.

NCLB also says that Title I schools must notify parents:

- About the school improvement status of their child's school. Title I schools that do not meet AYP for at least two years in a row may be required to offer students public school choice within the district, and after two years in school improvement status, supplemental education services for students or tutoring. Schools that continue to be identified for improvement may be listed for corrective action.
- Of their child's achievement level on state tests.
- If their child has been assigned or taught for at least four consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet the highly qualified definition.
- Of their right to be involved in the planning and implementation of the parent involvement program in their school.

We are using our school improvement plan to examine the challenges facing our school, including those identified under NCLB. Some of the things we are doing to make our school better, include [**LIST SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS HERE**].

We need your help to make sure all children are successful in school and in life. By working together as a community, we'll overcome our challenges and

build the bright future our children deserve. If you'd like to get involved, contact your building principal.

***FOR ALL SCHOOLS:***

If you have any additional questions about No Child Left Behind and its impact on our school, please contact [**NAME**] at [**CONTACT INFORMATION**] or visit [www.nochildleftbehind.gov](http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov).

-end-

# Local communication plan ideas

## Suggested local target audiences:

1. School/district employees
2. Parents
3. Business leaders and employees
4. Media
5. Elected and/or government officials
6. Civic and nonprofit groups
7. Faith community
8. Students

<u>Audience</u>	<u>Communications vehicles</u>
1. School/district employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At beginning of the year convocations, districtwide or schoolwide, focus on the new federal law and how Ohio is responding.</li><li>• Link the school district and individual school Web sites to the state site. <a href="http://www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/">www.ode.state.oh.us/esea/</a></li><li>• Hold information sessions for school improvement teams and ask teams to coordinate the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) information sessions at individual schools.</li><li>• Work with principals and assistant principals on the Education Management Information System (EMIS) issue of separating data by subgroups.</li><li>• Coordinate local release of adequate yearly progress (AYP) results so principals and others will be ready for the dissemination.</li><li>• Provide information and set up an interview session for superintendents or another central office representative with student newspaper editors.</li></ul>
2. Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborate with the local parent/teacher association (PTA) council/site councils or consider meeting with all PTA/PTO presidents and other officers to discuss NCLB.</li><li>• Meet with parents in Title I schools; possibly hold these meetings out in the community to inform them of the specific requirements and the sanctions of NCLB for these schools.</li><li>• Ask parent-teacher groups to discuss NCLB at their meetings.</li><li>• Make sure guidance counselors, nurses and others who have contact with parents are aware of the new federal law in case parents inquire.</li><li>• Conduct meetings with groups of parents by grade level, proficiency level or in neighborhoods.</li><li>• Provide copies of teachers' biographies for parents at the beginning of the year. Encourage teachers to post their diploma(s) in their classrooms.</li><li>• Hold a fair or other event so parents can learn more about what school choices are available.</li></ul>

<u>Audience</u>	<u>Communications vehicles</u>
3. Business leaders and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a speakers' bureau of local speakers on NCLB, train them and contact major employers to arrange work-site presentations.</li> <li>• Coordinate communications efforts with the local Chamber of Commerce education committee.</li> </ul>
4. News media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange for the superintendent, board chair or others involved in responding to NCLB to meet with editorial boards of local newspapers.</li> <li>• Provide a media kit for local reporters.</li> </ul>
5. Elected and/or government officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite legislators to a breakfast or lunch at a school and talk about the challenges and opportunities posed by the new federal legislation.</li> <li>• Encourage school board members and county commissioners to attend state-level meetings on NCLB.</li> <li>• Hold your own information session for local leaders, possibly co-sponsored with the city/county manager, to discuss NCLB.</li> </ul>
6. Civic and nonprofit groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact civic groups, minority groups, alumni associations and other active groups to arrange for speakers and materials distribution. Ask for their help in making sure no child is left behind in your community.</li> <li>• Develop a list of all civic organizations (i.e. Kiwanis, Jaycees, Women's Club, etc.) and ask members to share information on NCLB.</li> </ul>
7. Faith community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urge principals to use NCLB as a way to improve volunteer/mentor programs and opportunities with the local faith community.</li> <li>• Provide information for bulletin inserts, Web site materials and sermons.</li> </ul>
8. Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information to insert in school newspapers or to use in student-produced announcements or television programs.</li> <li>• Include a principal's letter in the student handbook.</li> </ul>

## Local No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) communications plan template

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Identify the audiences who need to be reached and how NCLB will impact each of these audiences.**

<i>Audience</i>	<i>NCLB impact on this audience</i>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____

**Prioritize the top six audiences in your list and determine the key messages for each.**

<i>Top six audiences</i>	<i>Key messages</i>
1. _____	_____ _____
2. _____	_____ _____
3. _____	_____ _____
4. _____	_____ _____
5. _____	_____ _____
6. _____	_____ _____

**Anticipate questions and your responses.**

<i>Question</i>	<i>Suggested response</i>
1. _____	_____ _____
2. _____	_____ _____
3. _____	_____ _____
4. _____	_____ _____
5. _____	_____ _____
6. _____	_____ _____
7. _____	_____ _____
8. _____	_____ _____
9. _____	_____ _____
10. _____	_____ _____

**Identify the NCLB communications team**

**List those in your district who will be responsible for communicating about NCLB.**

<i>Name/title</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____

**Determine best ways to get your messages to each audience.**

<i>Audience</i>	<i>Communications vehicles</i>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____

**Prepare a calendar**

**Record important NCLB events for each month.**

<i>2003–04 dates</i>	<i>Activity/event</i>
August	Release of AYP reports (10 a.m., August 19, 2003 — see note on page 9)
September	
October	
November	
December	
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	

## Evaluate your plan

Determine how successful you were at reaching audiences with your key messages.

<i>Evaluation means</i>	<i>Notes</i>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

## Glossary of terms

**Adequate yearly progress (AYP):** Adequate yearly progress is the minimum level of improvement that school districts and schools must achieve each year as determined under NCLB.

**Assessment:** A method to measure what students are learning. A test is one kind of assessment schools use.

**Corrective action:** When a school building or school district does not make AYP for four years in a row, the law provides for a corrective action plan. The plan includes a list of choices, from which the district (in the case of a building) or the state (in case of a district), must select at least one. If no progress is made, then the state has increased authority to make necessary additional changes to ensure improvement.

**Disaggregated data:** “Disaggregate” means to separate a whole into its parts. In education, this term means that test results are sorted by groups of students, including those who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic groups, have disabilities or have LEP, among others. This practice allows parents and teachers to see more than just the average score for a student’s school. Instead, parents and teachers can see how each student group is performing.

**Limited English proficient (LEP):** Limited English proficient (LEP) refers to students for whom English is a second language and who are not reading or writing English at grade level.

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):** NCLB is the most recent authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is the principal federal law affecting K-12 education.

**Ohio’s Accountability Committee:** Ohio’s Substitute House Bill 3 creates a state-level accountability committee consisting of 13 members appointed by the governor. The charge of the committee is to examine implementation of Ohio’s accountability plan, review fees for data analysis by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and report to ODE and the State Board of Education on issues related to the plan. The committee must produce a report with recommendations to improve the accountability system.

**Ohio’s accountability plan:** Ohio’s statewide accountability system includes state report card performance indicators, AYP determinations and a performance index score. Ohio’s Substitute House Bill 3 harmonizes the existing state accountability system with NCLB requirements.

**Parental involvement:** Parental involvement is the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students’ academic learning and other school activities. The involvement includes ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.

**Proficiency:** Proficiency is mastery or the ability to do something at grade level.

**Public school choice:** Students in Title I schools identified as needing improvement will have the option to transfer to a school within the district that makes AYP. The school district will be required to provide transportation to the students through a mandate to spend up to 20% of Title I, Part A, funds.

**Restructuring:** School buildings or districts not making AYP for six years in a row must follow one of the following restructuring options: reopen as a charter school; replace school staff; contract with an outside entity to operate school; state takeover; or other major restructuring of school governance.

**Safe Harbor:** “Safe Harbor” is a provision in NCLB intended for schools and districts that are making progress in student achievement but are not yet meeting target goals for AYP. It is designed to prevent the over-identification of schools not making AYP.

**School improvement plan/continuous improvement plan:** The written school improvement plan for each school includes strategies for improving student performance in the targeted goal areas, taking into account the performance on multiple assessments; how and when improvements will be implemented; use of state funds; requests for waivers, etc. Each school improvement plan must be approved by the local board. The plans may be amended as often as necessary or appropriate.

**Student subgroups:** Schools will receive their disaggregated AYP status for subgroups of students based on the following categories: racial/ethnicity, students with disabilities, LEP and economically disadvantaged students.

**Supplemental services:** Students from low-income families who are attending Title I schools that have been identified as needing improvement for three years will be eligible to receive outside tutoring or academic assistance. Parents can choose the appropriate services for their child from a list of state approved providers. The school district will purchase the services up to a certain percentage of their Title I allocation.

**Title I:** Title I refers to a federal funding program aimed at students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I, Part A funding provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of children in areas with high economic needs; it is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for the free lunch program. Title I is intended to supplement, not replace, state and district funds.

-end-