

No  
Child  
Left  
Behind

THE REAUTHORIZED ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

## AFT on Adequate Yearly Progress

Updated June 2007

### What NCLB Says

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—the most recent version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—provides vital federal funding to states and districts to improve student achievement in high-poverty schools. NCLB makes major changes to the Title I accountability provisions first instituted in 1994. The law required states to expand the administration of annual reading and math assessments to grades 3-8 by 2005-06, and to continue with assessments in at least one grade at the high school level. States were required to establish a formula for measuring adequate yearly progress (AYP), a minimum level of improvement on these assessments from year to year.

One hundred percent of students overall, and in each of a number of subgroups—low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, special education and English language learners—must reach state-defined “proficient” levels in reading and math assessments by 2013-14. Districts and schools that fail to make AYP toward that goal face a series of escalating consequences.

### Where AFT Stands

The AFT has long supported the accountability goals of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. However, we believe that the accountability formula used to calculate adequate yearly progress in the No Child Left Behind Act is fundamentally flawed.

Despite the word “progress” in the phrase Adequate Yearly Progress, the law doesn’t give enough credit for improvement. Instead, it requires schools and districts to meet arbitrary and unreasonable benchmarks. Schools that start far behind but make great gains will not be given credit for this improvement unless they hit the arbitrary targets. Many of these schools are located in poor neighborhoods.

Because this unworkable AYP formula will put many more schools than necessary on a “needs improvement” list, less money will be available to help the schools in greatest need. (See our NCLB Recommendations for more information on AYP.)

To address these concerns, the AFT has worked, and continues to work, with national experts on assessments and accountability systems to evaluate whether annual AYP targets for schools and districts are realistic and attainable, and whether schools have been identified for assistance because of statistical anomalies or for genuine academic reasons. Armed with these data, the AFT is working to make the necessary changes when the law is reauthorized.

At the same time, the AFT continues efforts to improve low-performing schools through our Redesigning Schools To Raise Achievement (RSRA) initiative and by expanding our professional development programs, including the Educational Research and Dissemination (ER&D) program.

For more information on No Child Left Behind, visit our Web site at [www.aft.org/topics/nclb](http://www.aft.org/topics/nclb).



*A Union of Professionals*

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20001  
202/879-4400  
[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

