Overview: Q & A on Adequate Yearly Progress

Glossary:

- **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP):** A federal requirement under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for measuring student performance over time. The basis of AYP is student performance on reading and mathematics standards. It is important to note that all Nebraska public schools are required to meet state accountability measures as well as AYP. However, consequences for missing AYP apply only to schools with Title I programs. Title I programs are federally funded programs created to assist schools with at least 2 percent or 10 students from low-income families.

- **School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS):** Nebraska’s system for assessing student performance on state standards. Improving student achievement and learning is the goal of Nebraska’s STARS and NCLB.

- **Title I programs:** Federally funded programs created to assist schools with at least 2 percent or 10 students from low-income families.

1. **What is Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?**
   As a condition of receiving federal funds under No Child Left Behind, all states are required to define a process for identifying groups of students, schools and districts that may need to improve. States also can be identified as needing improvement. This process is called Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP. AYP is an annual check to determine whether schools are meeting target goals for student performance in reading and mathematics. In Nebraska, AYP is a part of our state accountability system, STARS — School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System. STARS was designed to provide a broader picture of school performance than the federal AYP process under No Child Left Behind.

   To determine if a group of students, a school, district or the state has made AYP under NCLB, the following target goals must be met:

   - The performance of all students and groups of students, who have been enrolled in a district for a full academic year, must equal or exceed the state target goals in reading and math. Here are the target goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>8th</th>
<th>11th</th>
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And, Nebraska high schools must graduate 83 percent or more of their students.

- At least 95 percent of the students at grades 4, 8 and 11 must participate in the assessments, and
- The school and district must meet a state goal for one other indicator for elementary and middle schools. As noted in the above chart, the indicator for elementary and middle school is student performance on statewide writing assessments. At the high school level, the indicator is graduation rates.
- Schools must also receive a rating of Good, Very Good or Exemplary on the quality of the assessments they use to measure student performance.

2. How is school accountability under STARS different from that under No Child Left Behind requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress?

Improving student achievement and learning is the goal of Nebraska’s STARS and NCLB. The accountability component of NCLB takes a different approach to measuring progress toward improved learning.

The state system, STARS, was designed to identify how well schools and districts are providing an education for all students by looking at the percentage of students scoring at grade level or proficient, on standards at certain grade levels – grades 4, 8 and 11. NCLB looks at student performance by examining how well all students and groups of students are mastering our standards.

In the STARS system, the focus and reporting is on standards. In NCLB, the focus and reporting is on the performance of groups of students. To integrate NCLB into the STARS system, we added a requirement: Reporting on groups of students.

No Child Left Behind requires a continued emphasis on the basics by raising the level of student performance required until 100 percent of the students are proficient on standards in 2013-14. The goal is to close the achievement gaps between students of different racial groups, income groups, students with special needs and students with limited English proficiency. To determine whether groups of students are closing the achievement gap,
NCLB requires student performance results to be separated or disaggregated annually in reading and mathematics. The state goals and intermediate objectives were based on NCLB requirements with an ultimate goal of 100 percent of the students attaining at least a proficient level by 2013-14.

For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB, each group of students, the school and the district must meet or exceed the state goals in reading and math and at least one other academic indicator. And the school must include at least 95 percent of its students in the assessments. Nebraska has added another component: The school must have a rating of Good, Very Good or Exemplary on both the quality of the STARS.

3. **If a school doesn’t make AYP under No Child Left Behind, what does it mean?**
AYP is one indicator of a school or district’s performance. It focuses solely on whether or not any group of students met expectations. If a school does not make AYP it does NOT mean the school is “failing.” It does mean that schools must address the needs of that group of students in the subject area that is not showing progress.

4. **What happens to schools and districts that do not “make” AYP?**
All schools and districts in the state are accountable under both STARS and the AYP requirements of No Child Left Behind. The consequences outlined by the federal law for not making AYP affect only schools with Title I programs. Title I programs are federally funded programs created to assist schools with 2 percent or 10 students from low-income families.

Under federal law, Title I schools that miss AYP for two consecutive years must provide students with the option to transfer to another school in their district. In the second year of missing AYP, schools must offer supplemental services (tutoring) in addition to the option to transfer. If a Title I school does not make Adequate Yearly Progress in future years, additional sanctions are prescribed.

5. **How can we ensure that some children are not seen as a deterrent to the overall achievement of their school under NCLB?**
The federal NCLB’s requirement to look at student performance by groups of students was designed to provide information for teachers and school administrators about the needs of students. The entire school and community should be concerned if a group of students does not make progress and
appropriate steps should be taken to address the needs of those students. Research shows that the needs of a group of students who are not succeeding can be addressed effectively to ensure that ALL students are achieving.

6. As a federal law, isn’t NCLB taking over a key role in education?
It is appropriate for the federal government to set goals for the nation. However, No Child Left Behind is very prescriptive in setting goals and processes for schools and districts. By comparison, the STARS system is based on local control of curriculum, instruction and assessments. In addition, there are many important decisions for local districts to address: How local, state, and federal funds are used; what professional development is offered; how students and staff are assigned; what staff are hired; which students are promoted; how the STARS assessment system is implemented — these are just some of the decisions that are still under the control of districts.

7. In Nebraska, who is making decisions about how AYP will be defined?
A task force of representatives from more than 30 districts, Educational Service Units and the Nebraska Department of Education developed recommendations for the AYP decisions. Other advisory groups also helped develop the State Accountability Plan.

8. Will the definition of AYP stay the same until 2013-14?
The definition should stay the same but the way in which Nebraska collects data will change when the state has an individual student record system. Reporting requirements will change in the future, for example graduation rates will be reported by school building and student performance on reading and mathematics standards will be reported annually, beginning in 2004-05. Those changes will lead to the state reexamining the starting points and intermediate goals.