



Accountability: A More Accurate Description of Adequate Yearly Progress

One of the most important aspects of NCLB is the public release of disaggregated student subgroup performance. The law requires Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all demographic groups. ASHA supports the concept, but recognizes that there are difficulties in applying and implementing the specifics of the Act.

One problem with the current law is that all subgroups are expected to have the same degree of success. Schools with diverse populations have more subgroup targets to meet. Lower performing schools and districts must make larger gains to accomplish AYP. They may suffer sanctions even when they are markedly improving student achievement. To determine adequate yearly progress there needs to be a broader accountability system that relies on multiple forms of evidence about schools and student learning. This evidence should be used to support comprehensive improvements in teaching and learning.

The current concept of AYP is based on the assumption that each annual cohort of students should be equivalent to the last. However, school populations can differ from year to year, making the AYP estimations unreliable. AYP should take into account the starting point for each school or district at the beginning of each year and acknowledge growth of mean proficiency within during the school-year for each cohort. Schools should meet high standards, but the accountability system needs to accurately assess their success in increasing rates of learning.

ASHA Recommendations for Accountability in NCLB Reform:

1. Use a value-added/student growth system which credits schools for longitudinal growth in student achievement, such as how students in a particular grade or cohort have improved from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, or how a group of students have improved as they advance in grade level. Include benchmarks to measure increased achievement and disaggregate by subgroups. This would be a more accurate measure of school and student performance, and allow states to focus limited resources on the students and schools most in need.
2. Provide a comprehensive picture of students' and schools' performance by moving from an overwhelming reliance on standardized tests to using multiple indicators of student achievement in addition to standardized tests.
3. Broaden the definition of what counts as evidence of success and replace the law's arbitrary proficiency targets with ambitious achievement targets based on rates of success actually achieved by the most effective public schools. This might mean, for example, examining the largest average improvement in Title I schools and using that as a benchmark for developing performance targets.