



## **No Child Left Behind 2005 Priorities**

### **Introduction**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) established a rigorous standard for the nation's public schools and a strict model to assess student, school and district achievement. Since 2002, local school boards, administrators, teachers and students have struggled to comply with the spirit and intent of the law at a time when the unintended consequences are far more complex than what had likely been anticipated by members of Congress.

At the heart of NCLB is the concept of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a measure of year-over-year achievement based on student testing. NCLB requires a 100 percent student proficiency rate in reading and math by 2014, with incremental percentage goals leading up to this date. Within schools this determination must be made not only on the basis of the school's enrollment as a whole, but also on the basis of the performance of student subgroups, some of which have historically been associated with lower academic achievement.

The issues involved with Adequate Yearly Progress are not whether students and groups of students should have a rigorous program, be monitored for progress, or have their needs identified; nor is the issue whether schools and school districts should be held accountable for student achievement. School boards support all of these achievement strategies. The real issue and concern for public education advocates is whether the current system will over-identify students and schools as not achieving and undermine the credibility of public schools in Tennessee and America.

In 2004, the Tennessee School Boards Association adopted a Position Paper on No Child Left Behind and recommended 12 realistic and responsible recommendations to Congress and/or the U.S. Department of Education. Since that time, some of these recommendations have been addressed or partially addressed through rules and regulations while others have not.

In 2005, TSBA encourages the Tennessee congressional delegation to revisit at least three of these recommendations related to the concept of Adequate Yearly Progress. Tennessee's school boards believe these three recommendations are common-sense, reasonable approaches to improve NCLB, either through statute or rules and regulations.

**January 2005**

**1. Allow states, like Tennessee, that have the proper assessment measures in place to use value-added or gain scores, which measure the progress of all students from year to year, for the purpose of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress.**

*Rationale:*

Currently, Adequate Yearly Progress is aimed at the singular determination of whether a student reaches a “cut” score that has been identified as proficient by the state. Certainly, this is an important measurement; however, in terms of determining whether a school or district needs improvement, other equally or more relevant measures – such as progress – are being ignored.

Furthermore, while commendable, NCLB’s staunch focus on raising only the achievement levels of lower performing students could work to weaken efforts to improve student achievement for others, as it provides no incentive for continuing to improve the performance of those students who are already at or above the proficient levels.

Tennessee and other states that have programs in place to measure gain or progress should not be limited from utilizing them to show adequate yearly progress simply because other states have chosen not to focus on individual growth for students, schools and districts. Instead, the federal government should embrace the value-added concept and encourage states to explore this tool of achievement measurement.

**2. Limit school choice provisions to those students belonging to subgroups not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress.**

*Rationale:*

If a school does not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in the same subject for two consecutive years, parents must be notified of the option to transfer their child to another school, regardless of whether the student is meeting standards or even within the subgroup or subgroups not meeting AYP. These current transfer options overburden school districts with increased transportation costs and costs associated with additional classroom space and personnel needed to educate the influx of students. Because NCLB is intended to help those students who are not receiving an “adequate” education in their current school and because capacity concerns cannot be used as an excuse to limit transfer options, NCLB’s school choice mandates need to be revised to focus on those students in need.

**3. Apply sanctions to schools or school districts only when the same subgroup or subgroups do not meet AYP targets in the same subject.**

*Rationale:*

Current rules apply sanctions to schools and districts when they fall short on AYP targets in a subject for two consecutive years regardless of whether it is the same subgroup or subgroups. For example, if in Year 1 the Special Education subgroup missed AYP in Reading/Language Arts but met AYP in Year 2, the school or district would still fail AYP if another subgroup, such as English Language Learners, missed the mark in Reading/Language Arts in Year 2. In other words, although the school or district recognized the need identified by NCLB data and improved student achievement based on such identification, it will still be sanctioned due to the new identification of a different subgroup. NCLB is supposedly designed to give school districts at least one year to improve achievement based on AYP data. This current method of sanctioning schools seems to go against this concept.

---