

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PROPOSES PLAN TO DEMONSTRATE SCHOOL PROGRESS UNDER NCLB API would remain hallmark of California school accountability system

SACRAMENTO – The State Board of Education today approved a statewide accountability proposal to implement the requirement in the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) that schools demonstrate annual progress in getting all students to proficiency in reading and math.

A major provision in NCLB is that all schools demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) so that all students in all schools perform at or above the “proficient” level in reading-language arts and mathematics by 2014. Over the past several months, the State Board has reviewed options on how it might integrate AYP requirements within the framework of California’s existing statewide accountability system, the Academic Performance Index or API.

By an 8-1 vote, the State Board approved a recommendation by Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell to establish an appended API so that California would maintain its API system while adding the AYP requirements as another element of each school’s accountability report. As a result, the API and its widely known statewide ranking of schools would be maintained with relatively little change. The biggest change to the API is a mandate under NCLB to include students with disabilities, and students with limited English-language proficiency, known as English learners, to the list of significant “subgroups” for which detailed reporting is required.

Under the approved plan, the API would be supplemented with an AYP report that would provide a breakdown on the percent of each subgroup scoring at “proficient or above” on standards-based tests in reading and mathematics. The AYP school report would appear on the back of the traditional API report.

“Under this proposal, the API will remain the beacon of stability in our school accountability system,” said State Board President Reed Hastings. “At the same time, we would report to the federal government the information it seeks to implement the provisions for ensuring adequate yearly school progress.”

Added Superintendent O’Connell: “There will be more information to show what we need to do to improve. This is the right way to go in an imperfect world.”

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Hastings noted that in California, students who graduate at the “proficient” level are considered college-ready. “We applaud the high goals for individual student progress in NCLB,” Hastings said. “Even our most outstanding schools do not today meet NCLB’s mandate for 100% student proficiency in reading and math. But this is a challenge we will work hard to meet.”

California’s AYP plan must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by the end of January, after which it will undergo a “peer” review process at the USDE. After this review, the USDE may require changes in California’s AYP plan.

The State Board reviewed other options for implementing AYP, but rejected those because they were deemed to be non-compliant with NCLB and therefore “non-starters” for federal officials. State Board members and Superintendent O’Connell expressed the need for the state to submit a plan that would win prompt approval to ensure that federal funds would not be jeopardized, particularly at a time when California schools are facing state budget cuts. In addition, under the approved proposal, the API may be used in conjunction with AYP to prioritize interventions for Title I schools identified for special assistance.

Here are the highlights of California’s proposed AYP reporting plan:

- **Definition of “adequate yearly progress”:** A minimum percentage of students at each school must perform at or above the "proficient" level each year in reading-language arts and math. The minimum percentage of students who are required to meet or exceed the proficient level each year applies separately to each subgroup, as well. The minimum percentage rises each year, so that by 2014, *all students in all schools* must achieve at the "proficient" level or higher in both content areas.
- **Definition of “proficient”:** 1) “Proficient and above” in reading-language arts and mathematics in grades 2-8 would be based on the percentage of students scoring at the proficient or advanced level on the California Standards Tests (CSTs). These tests assess how well students are mastering the state’s rigorous academic content standards, which lay out what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. 2) At the high school level, the definition of “proficient” in reading and math would be tied to scores on the California High School Exit Exam, which is a pass/fail test. “Cut scores” for achieving proficiency at the high school level would be equivalent to achieving proficiency on the California standards-based tests in reading-language arts and math.
- **Required student subgroups:** California must add two student groups to the current list of “significant subgroups” that are required to demonstrate improvement in the statewide accountability system. The significant subgroups currently in the API are major racial and ethnic groups, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Students with disabilities, and students with limited proficiency in English, known as English learners, would be added as subgroups to the API system, as well as appearing on the AYP reports. This addition to the API would require a change in state law.
- **School accountability reports:** API scores and statewide rankings would continue to be posted on the Internet for schools, students and parents, and the general public. AYP reports for each school, each school district and the state overall would be reported to the federal government, as required by NCLB.

For more detailed information, see the attached Q&A.

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