



## Background

The Tennessee Department of Education secured a waiver from certain portions of the federal accountability law No Child Left Behind in 2012. This waiver allowed the state to continue to improve academically and meet its own growth goals, rather than the unrealistically high proficiency cutoffs set by the federal government.

## Tennessee's Accountability System

Tennessee created its own accountability system that replaces No Child Left Behind's accountability measures, called Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP. The system also aligns with the state's goal of becoming the fastest-improving in the nation.

- Rather than expecting all schools to meet certain proficiency targets, the new system focuses on growth and improvement, recognizing that schools are starting from various levels of proficiency.
- The system requires a focus on ensuring **growth for all students** every year and closing achievement gaps by ensuring **faster growth for those students who are furthest behind**.
- Unlike No Child Left Behind, which was primarily focused on accountability at the school level, Tennessee's accountability system positions districts as key points of action to help schools improve.
- To assist districts in growing their overall achievement and narrowing gaps, the state's Centers of Regional Excellence, or CORE offices, are equipped with data specialists, content specialists, and support staff. These centers help districts learn from each other and target their intervention to the subjects and student populations that need it the most.

## District Level Accountability

Districts reach **Exemplary** status if they:

- Meet the majority of their achievement goals,
- Meet majority of their goals to close achievement gaps, and
- Ensure every subgroup—students with disabilities, racial minorities, English learners and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds—also moves forward in a majority of its target areas.

These three requirements show that districts are raising proficiency levels, narrowing achievement gaps, and guaranteeing growth for all students.

Districts that fail to reach the majority of their targets for both achievement and gap closure are **In Need of Improvement**. These districts will meet in-person with department officials to set an aggressive, effective plan to meet the goals they missed the year prior.

Districts may successfully attain their goals in achievement, gap closure, or even both, while experiencing declines among particular groups of students. These districts are designated **In Need of Subgroup Improvement** and will focus efforts on ensuring all groups of students show improvement in the following year.

### About the Tennessee Department of Education

The Tennessee Department of Education strives to expand students' access to effective teachers and leaders, families' access to good schools, educators' access to resources and best practices and public access to information and data. We aim to be the fastest-improving state in the nation in terms of academic achievement by 2015.