

# Frequently Asked Questions from Educators about No Child Left Behind and Accountability

Tennessee Department of Education  
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## Adequate Yearly Progress

**1. How does a school or district make adequate yearly progress (AYP)?**

An elementary or middle school needs to meet the requirements in the following three cells:

<b>Academic</b>		<b>Additional Indicator</b>
Math	Reading/Language Arts/Writing	Attendance Rate
1. 95% participation rate 2. Meet the State’s annual target for percent of students testing proficient or above (when 95% confidence interval applied) or through Safe Harbor  * Both requirements must be met by all students in the school/district and for each subgroup that meets the minimum N of 45 or 1% of total tested population if over 4500 scores.	1. 95% participation rate 2. Meet the State’s annual target for percent of students testing proficient or above (when 95% confidence interval applied) or through Safe Harbor  * Both requirements must be met by all students in the school/district and for each subgroup that meets the minimum N of 45 or 1% of total tested population if over 4500 scores.	Meet the State’s annual target for attendance rate for all students in the school/district (93%) or show improvement.

A high school needs to meet the requirements in the following three cells:

<b>Academic</b>		<b>Additional Indicator</b>
Math	Reading/Language Arts/Writing	Graduation Rate
1. 95% participation rate 2. Meet the State’s annual target for percent of students testing proficient or above (when 95% confidence interval applied) or through Safe Harbor  * Both requirements must be met by all students in the school/district and for each subgroup that meets the minimum N of 45 or 1% of total tested population if over 4500 scores.	1. 95% participation rate 2. Meet the State’s annual target for percent of students testing proficient or above (when 95% confidence interval applied) or through Safe Harbor  * Both requirements must be met by all students in the school/district and for each subgroup that meets the minimum N of 45 or 1% of total tested population if over 4500 scores.	Meet the State’s annual target for graduation rate for all students in the school/district (90%) or be on track to meet 90% by 2013-14. *Beginning in 2005-06, the high school additional indicator will be the previous year’s graduation rate.

**2. *What happens if a school or district does not meet AYP for the first time?***

A school or district that does not meet AYP for the first time is considered “targeted” and this status will be reported on the state’s website. In addition, Title I schools must annually inform their parents about the progress the school is making in meeting AYP.

**3. *How does a school or a district become high priority?***

Schools or districts must fail the same cell for two consecutive years (e.g. math-math, reading/language arts-reading/language arts, or additional indicator-additional indicator) to be identified as high priority. High priority schools and districts are presented to the State Board of Education for approval.

**4. *Will the formula for AYP change?***

No. The formula will always include only the results from the math and reading/language arts/writing assessments. Science and social studies results will not be used for AYP determinations.

Starting with school year 2005-2006, AYP determinations for elementary and middle schools will be based on the results of the math and reading/language arts assessments for grades 3 through 8. Until that year, AYP determinations were only based on results of the math and reading/language arts assessments for grades 3, 5, and 8.

**5. *If a school fails AYP in a content area (math or reading/language arts) because of the result of one subgroup’s performance and the next year the school fails the same content area because of another subgroup’s performance, is the school identified as high priority?***

Yes. If a school or district fails the same cell for two consecutive years for any reason, the school is identified as high priority. See the example below.

The economically disadvantaged students do not make AYP at Volunteer Elementary School because they have too few students in this subgroup who are proficient or advanced in reading. (See Table I.) The school is placed on the **Target** list.

**Table I  
Year 1**

	All Students	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	Limited English Proficient
Math % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Math % Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
R/LA/W % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
R/LA/W Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Attendance	Y								

In Year 2, the economically disadvantaged students make AYP in reading, but the students with disabilities do not because less than 95 percent participated in testing. (See Table II.) Therefore, by virtue of having any subgroup fail AYP for two consecutive years in the **reading/language arts cell**, the school is now placed in **School Improvement**. It is identified as a “High Priority” school.

**Table II  
Year 2**

	All Students	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	Limited English Proficient
Math % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Math % Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
R/LA/W % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
R/LA/W Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Attendance	Y								

**6. Is norm-referenced data used to determine whether or not a school or district has met AYP?**

No. Only the information from the criterion-referenced tests in reading/language arts/writing and math are used to determine AYP status. Starting with Spring 2005, the State’s TCAP assessments do not include norm-referenced items. All items are criterion-referenced and tied directly to the State’s content standards for each grade level.

**7. How do teachers know what will be on the criterion-referenced tests?**

The new tests are aligned with the State’s approved content standards, which are located on the Department’s web site at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/mcurriculum.htm> . Content

standards contain performance indicators which describe what students need to know and be able to do in that content area at specific grade levels. Tennessee's Blueprint for Learning provides educators and the public with a quick referenced to all of the State's content standards and performance indicators at each grade level and in each subject area. Tennessee's criterion-referenced assessments contain test items that are aligned with these performance indicators.

**8. Will the benchmarks for AYP remain the same for Spring 2006 as they were for Spring 2005?**

Yes. The benchmarks will not increase again until Spring 2008. The benchmarks for elementary/middle school and high school are:

***Tennessee's Benchmarks for Reading/Language Arts and Math at the Elementary/Middle School Level Determined by the Percent of Students at the Proficient or Above Levels***

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Reading/Language Arts Target</b>	<b>Math Target</b>	<b>Attendance Rate</b>
2002-2003 through 2003-2004	77%	72%	93%
2004-2005 through 2006-2007	83%	79%	93%
2007-2008 through 2009-2010	89%	86%	93%
2010-2011 through 2012-2013	94%	93%	93%
2013-2014	100%	100%	93%

***Tennessee's Benchmarks for Reading/Language Arts and Math at the High School Level Determined by the Percent of Students at the Proficient or Above Levels***

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Reading/Language Arts Target</b>	<b>Math Target</b>	<b>Graduation Rate</b>
2002-2003 through 2003-2004	86%	65%	90%
2004-2005 through 2006-2007	90%	75%	90%
2007-2008 through 2009-2010	93%	83%	90%
2010-2011 through 2012-2013	97%	91%	90%
2013-2014	100%	100%	100%

### ***9. How does safe harbor work?***

If any subgroup fails the target for either reading/language arts/writing or math, it may demonstrate that it has made AYP by using the safe harbor provision. The school or district must show that the subgroup has:

- Made a 10% reduction in the percent of students that tested below proficient from the preceding year; a 19% reduction in the percent of students that tested below proficient from two years ago; or a 27% reduction in the percent of students that tested below proficient from three years ago; and,
- Made the target or improvement for the additional indicator.

The State calculates safe harbor for schools and districts. It is possible to apply safe harbor for the same subgroup in both math and reading/language arts if the above conditions are met.

For example, in Year 1 Hispanic students at ABC Elementary School did not meet the annual measurable objective in math, which was 72%. In fact, 40% of the Hispanic students were “below proficient” resulting in only 60% proficiency rate. In Year 2, Hispanic students did not meet the annual measurable objective in math again. However, only 36% of the Hispanic students were “below proficient” in math in Year 2, and Hispanic students had an attendance rate of 95%, which exceeded the additional indicator goal of 93%. The two conditions for safe harbor were met for this subgroup. First, they made a 10% reduction in the percent of students that tested below proficient from the preceding year (a reduction of 4 percentage points; that is, 10 percent of 40 percent). Second, they met the target for the additional indicator. Hence, ABC Elementary School met AYP in math for Hispanic students by employing safe harbor.

### ***10. Are there other ways that a school or district may demonstrate meeting AYP?***

Yes. There are two other ways that all schools or districts may demonstrate meeting AYP even though the annual academic benchmarks in math or reading/language arts are not met. Elementary/middle schools may also demonstrate meeting AYP through the growth model (see question 30).

First, the State applies a 95% confidence interval to AYP determinations. This procedure provides for statistically valid and reliable AYP determinations by establishing a range of allowable scores below the academic targets. These ranges vary depending upon the number of scores that are included in the AYP determinations. When there are fewer scores, the range around the target that is allowable is larger than when there are more scores.

Second, schools or districts may use the most current year, the most current two years', or the most current three years' worth of data to demonstrate that they have made AYP. The State will calculate this for schools and districts.

***11. Can a school or district appeal its AYP determination?***

Yes. Within 30 days, the school or district must appeal the AYP determination, the state must review the evidence for the appeal, and a final AYP determination must be made. As required by NCLB, the appeal must be based on an error because of “statistical or other substantive reasons.” Schools or districts that want to appeal their AYP determinations must do so on-line at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/nclb/appeals.shtml>.

***12. What is the difference between the terms “school improvement” and “high priority”?***

NCLB and our state use different terminology to describe the same stages of schools identified in our accountability system. High priority is the state’s term for the NCLB term “school improvement.” The chart below describes the different terminology that is used for the different stages in NCLB and our state law.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
NCLB	School Improvement Year 1	School Improvement Year 2	Corrective Action	Restructuring 1	Restructuring 2
State	School Improvement	On Notice	Probation	Corrective Action	Alternative Governance

***13. Does the accountability system include both Title I and non-Title I schools?***

Yes. Our state law requires that all schools be held accountable. Title I schools are held to the same requirements as non-Title I schools but also must implement NCLB-mandated interventions.

***14. What does the State mean by the N count?***

N count is the minimum amount of students in a subgroup tested for that subgroup to count in the accountability determination. The minimum N count will be 1% of the tested students or 45 whichever is greater. When the total scores exceed 4500, then the N count for the inclusion of a subgroup in the AYP determination must be 1% of the total scores. That means that 45 students must be enrolled in the grades tested for that subgroup to be included in the accountability system at the school level. School districts with tested scores of more than 4500 use the formula of 1% of the total scores for the N count.

**15. What do “full academic year” and “continuously enrolled” mean and why are they important?**

Only students who are in a school or district for a full academic year are counted in a school or district’s accountability determination. A full academic year in Tennessee is defined as a student who is continuously enrolled for at least 1 day of the first 20 day reporting period until the time of the test administration. This information is bubbled in on the student’s answer sheet.

**16. How does a school or district get off of the high priority list?**

To be removed from the High Priority list, a school or district must meet AYP for two consecutive years in the same cell that got the school or district on the list originally. For example, if a school got on the High Priority list because of failing the math cell for two or more consecutive years, then it would have to make AYP in math for two consecutive years to be removed from the list. However, if the school or district failed AYP in another cell for two consecutive years or more during the time it was identified as high priority, then it would remain on the high priority list but be reclassified at a lower level.

For example: (**Bold** denotes highest status)

Year 3 – Reading/Language Arts (**School Improvement 2**), Math (Good Standing)

	All Students	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	Limited English Proficient
Math % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Math % Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
R/LA/W % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
R/LA/W Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Attendance	Y								

Year 4 – Reading Language Arts (**School Improvement 2 – Improving**), Math (Target)

	All Students	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	Limited English Proficient
Math % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Math % Proficient	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
R/LA/W % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
R/LA/W	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Proficient									
Attendance	Y								

Year 5 – Reading/Language Arts (Good Standing), Math (**School Improvement 1**)

	All Students	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Native American	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	Limited English Proficient
Math % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Math % Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
R/LA/W % Tested	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
R/LA/W Proficient	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Attendance	Y								

**Subgroups**

***17. How many subgroups are there and what are they?***

There are nine subgroups: all students, 5 race/ethnic groups (white, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American), limited English proficient, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged (free/reduced lunch).

***18. Are students with disabilities expected to take the same assessments as non-disabled students?***

Students with disabilities may take an alternate assessment or the regular assessment with allowable modifications and accommodations. According to the proposed U.S. Department of Education’s (USDOE) regulations, only 1% of the proficient scores from the alternate assessment may be included for AYP determinations. The USDOE defines the students eligible to take the alternate assessment as being severely cognitively disabled. Alternate assessments are not aligned with grade level standards in the regular curriculum but with alternate standards for special education students. All other students with disabilities must take the regular assessment with allowable accommodations or special accommodations. You may find a list of allowable accommodations that any student is entitled to at <http://state.tn.us/education/assessment/tsaccom.shtml>. Special accommodations for students with disabilities can also be found at <http://state.tn.us/education/assessment/tsaccom.shtml>.

***19. Are students who are limited English proficient expected to take the same assessments as their English-speaking counterparts?***

Yes. Limited English proficient students (also referred to as English Language Learners or ELL) must take the TCAP reading/language arts and math assessment at their grade level with allowable accommodations or special accommodations. You may find a list of these allowable accommodations and special accommodations at <http://state.tn.us/education/assessment/tsaccom.shtml>. English Language Learners who have been in an American school for less than one year must take the TCAP reading/language arts and math assessments, but their scores are not included in AYP determinations. However, their participation is included in the participation rate calculations of schools and districts.

ELL students also take the CELLA for determining proficiency in English for Title III purposes.

***20. How does the State incorporate the results of an alternate assessment for students with disabilities in the accountability system?***

The results are incorporated in a school's accountability status at the appropriate grade level and proficiency level. For example, a student with a disability who is 11 years old and chronologically at sixth grade level would have his/her alternative assessment score reported as a part of the sixth grade scores for the school he/she is attending.

**Assessments**

***21. Are the items on the criterion-referenced test "weighted?"***

The criterion-referenced results are based on the number of correct items. Hence, the items are not weighted.

***22. Are there questions from Levels 1, 2, and 3 from the Performance Indicators on the grade level test or will students only be tested on Level 2 items at their grade level?***

The criterion-referenced test includes items from all 3 levels of the performance indicators. Every State Performance Indicator is addressed at every grade level and in each subject area.

***23. Will there be access to a list of objectives tested with the number of questions per objective as was provided in previous years with the former Terra Nova test?***

On the criterion-referenced part of the assessment, each State Performance Indicator is addressed on the assessment by one or more items.

***24. How many questions must a student at a particular grade level and subject area answer correctly to score proficient or advanced?***

The State adopted scale scores to determine proficiency. Although the State does not anticipate changing scale score cuts for reading/language arts and math, the number of correct items that correspond to any scale score does vary depending on the test form that is used in any year.

The scores needed for proficient or advanced on elementary/middle school exams can be found at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/assessment/tsach03nproflvl.shtml> . The scores needed for proficient or advanced on high school Gateway exams can be found at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/tsgatewayproflvl.htm> .

The State uses a special “bookmarking” procedure to determine cut scores for these assessments. This procedure involves teams of educators from around the state that are brought together by the Division of Assessment and Evaluation to review the State’s content standards and impact data to recommend cut scores. The State Board of Education must approve these cut scores, which are also known as the State’s achievement standards.

***25. What happens to the scores for middle school students who take the Gateway math exam?***

The State “banks” these students’ scores until they enter high school. Then these scores are included in the receiving high schools accountability determinations.

### **Additional Indicators**

***26. What are the goals for the additional indicators?***

At the elementary/middle school level, the additional indicator is the attendance rate. The goal a school must reach is 93% or improvement from the previous year.

At the high school level, the additional indicator is the graduation rate. The target a school must reach is 90% or be on track to reach 90% by 2013-14. Districts can see a year-by-year list of their graduation rate targets on the AYP Graduation and Dropout Data website at: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/mleaops.htm>.

***27. What is meant by the graduation rate?***

The graduation rate is the percent of students who exit high school with a regular diploma within the standard number of years. For most students, the standard number of years is defined as four years and a summer. For students with disabilities and limited English proficient students with IEPs that provide for their graduation with a regular diploma within five years and a summer, the standard number of years is defined as five years and a summer.

In order to comply with the NCLB law, regular diploma does not include special education diplomas, GEDs, or certificates of attendance.

The formula is:

$$\frac{\text{regular on-time graduates}}{\text{regular on-time graduates} + \text{regular late graduates} + \text{GEDs} + \text{certificates of attendance} + \text{special education diplomas} + \text{dropouts (9}^{\text{th}} \text{ grade 00-01, 10}^{\text{th}} \text{ grade 01-02, 11}^{\text{th}} \text{ grade 02-03, 12}^{\text{th}} \text{ grade 03-04)}}$$

***28. Must all students and each subgroup meet the additional indicator targets (attendance and graduation rate) to meet AYP?***

No. For accountability purposes, schools and districts must meet the targets for attendance and graduation for “all” students. Both the attendance and graduation rates are disaggregated by subgroup for reporting purposes and for the application of safe harbor provisions.

***29. How does the timing work for additional indicators?***

For attendance rate, we use the current year’s attendance rate. Because of the significant time involved in collecting and verifying data for the graduation rate, Tennessee uses the previous year’s graduation rate for AYP. In other words, for AYP determinations based on 2005-06 test data, we will use 2004-05 graduation rates.

**Growth Model Pilot Program**

***30. How can elementary and middle schools meet AYP through the growth model?***

Tennessee is one of two states to be approved to use a growth model for AYP that is based on 2005-06 test data. All elementary and middle schools will be evaluated based on the traditional AYP model and also through the growth model. The schools may meet AYP through the traditional model, the growth model, or both.

To meet AYP through the growth model, all subgroups must meet the benchmarks (question 8) in reading/language arts *and* math using the percent of students with proficient or advanced projected scores on the assessment three years into the future.

The model will use a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student’s projected score on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade TCAP in the same subject; it will use a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student’s projected score on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade TCAP in the same subject; and it will use a 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade student’s projected score on Gateway in the same subject. The model will use current scores for students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students with no

prior test score, and students who take alternative assessments. The confidence interval is NOT applied to this percentage.

For example, if a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student scores **below proficient** in math in 2005-06, but has made such progress since the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade that the student has a projected score of proficient on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math TCAP, the student will be counted as “*proficient*” in the growth model. Conversely, if a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student scores **proficient** in math in 2005-06, but has made such declines since the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade that the student has a projected score of below proficient on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math TCAP, the student will be counted as “*below proficient*” in the growth model.