



NCLB Fact Sheet #1

NCLB and School Accountability in Maine

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA. The ESEA was first passed in 1965 under the Johnson Administration in an effort to provide federal funds that would improve the performance of students who may be at risk of school failure, particularly those living in poverty. The current authorization, NCLB, requires schools to prove that they are raising the achievement of disadvantaged students or face penalties. Schools are held responsible for student achievement through a system of accountability.

NCLB requires all States to develop academic standards (i.e. what students should know and be able to do at each grade level). Maine's academic standards are the Learning Results. Districts must then align the curriculum (what teachers teach in the classroom) to the State standards. Schools must also administer yearly tests to see how well students are meeting the Learning Results. Maine's tests are called the Maine Educational Assessment, or MEA. NCLB requires that schools test all students in grades 3 through 8 and once again in grade 11. NCLB-related testing data is being collected by the Maine Department of Education each school year.

In addition to increased testing, NCLB requires an accountability system in which student test scores are separated into distinct categories, or "subgroups", to be sure that the students who are most at risk are performing well. The NCLB subgroups include: race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability, and low-income.

The ultimate goal of NCLB is for all students to score "proficient" or above on State standard tests by the year 2014. Every State is required to develop a system of accountability to move toward this goal, known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The Maine Department of Education will use the MEA test scores each year to rate schools on the AYP track and to determine whether or not schools are impacting the achievement of all students.

If a school does not have the required number of Proficient MEA scores to meet the State's numbers for AYP in any given year, NCLB mandates a series of consequences. Failure to meet AYP for two consecutive years results in the label of Continuous Improvement Priority School (CIPS1). The numeral that follows the CIP label shows the number of consecutive years the school has failed to meet AYP (i.e. CIPS2, CIPS3, CIPS4). All CIP schools are required to notify parents of this status and to offer a series of educational options, including school choice and supplemental educational services. Maine PIRC has fact sheets on each of these topics.

For more information on this and other educational topics, contact Maine State PIRC.



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