

Helping Parents Understanding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

What is AYP?

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is designed to ensure that each year schools and school systems demonstrate continuous improvement toward the goal of 100 percent proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014, as mandated by the *No Child Left Behind Act*. AYP is part of the accountability system developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to comply with this federal mandate.

How is AYP measured?

There are 37 targets that schools must meet annually in order to achieve AYP. If a school does not meet any one of these targets, it will not meet AYP for that year. There are nine targets for proficiency in reading, nine targets for participation in reading testing, nine targets for proficiency in mathematics, nine targets for participation in mathematics testing, and one target for an additional academic indicator—attendance rate for elementary and middle schools and graduation rate for high schools.

The target for reading and mathematics proficiency is to reach a designated percent of students who perform at or above the proficient level on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) and the Alternate Maryland School Assessment (Alt-MSA). Schools must meet this target for their entire student population and for eight subgroups—American Indian, Asian American, African American, Hispanic, and white students, and students receiving special education services, students with limited English proficiency, and students receiving free and reduced-price meals. The target is the same for every subgroup and increases each year to bring schools closer to the goal of 100 percent of students at or above the proficient level.

The target for participation in testing is to have 95 percent of students participate in testing. Maryland ensures that all schools will meet this target by giving any student who is absent or does not take the test an automatic “basic” categorization of progress. In Maryland, all schools will have 100 percent participation in testing.

The target for attendance for elementary and middle schools is 94 percent for all students. This target remains the same every year. The target for graduation rates for high schools is to improve by at least 0.1 percent every year for all students, with the goal for 2014 to have 90 percent of students graduating.

How do I know if a school met AYP?

The results for AYP are posted on the “School Improvement in Maryland” Web site (www.mdk12.org); and each year, the school district will mail information to parents about the school’s performance on MSA and AYP.

The AYP tables that are posted on the MSDE Web site look like the one below:

	Reading AMO	Reading Part.	Math AMO	Math Part.	Attendance
All students	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
American Indian	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Asian American	Met	Met	Met	Met	
African American	Met	Met	Met	Met	
Hispanic	Met	Met	Met	Met	
White	Met	Met	Met	Met	
FARMS	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	
Special Ed.	Met	Met	Met	Met	
LEP	Met	Met	Met	Met	

In this example, since the school did not make AYP in one cell, it is identified as not having made AYP for that year.

What does “NA” mean on the AYP table?

To be accountable for a subgroup for proficiency, a school must have at least five students in that group. If a school has less than five students, then it is not accountable for performance in that cell and “NA” will be listed. To be accountable for participation, a school must have at least 30 students tested for one grade level or 60 students tested for two or more grade levels. If there were fewer than these numbers of students tested, then an “NA” appears in the cell.

Why do some schools make AYP even though they did not have the required percent of students perform at or above the proficient level?

In order to account for possible measurement errors inherent in any testing program, the MSDE uses confidence intervals around the percent at proficient. The larger the group of students in the cell—the smaller the confidence interval. The smaller the group of students in the cell—the larger the confidence interval.

Thus, if a school was supposed to have 44 percent of students at proficient, but the confidence interval extended from 30 percent to 56 percent, then that school would meet AYP, as long as 30 percent of the students made AYP. With very small cell sizes (particularly groups of five), the confidence interval is very large, so schools that have few or in some cases zero students at proficient will still meet AYP.

Another way that schools can make AYP is through Safe Harbor. Achieving AYP in 37 cells is very difficult. If a school met AYP in the cell for all students but missed for one or two subgroups, then Safe Harbor could be applied. If that subgroup had shown improvement from the year before, then MSDE could apply Safe Harbor rules and that school could meet AYP.

What happens if a school does not make AYP?

If a school does not make AYP, and remember AYP requires hitting the target in 37 cells, it begins a process that can lead to “School Improvement” status. The first year that a school misses AYP, it is put on alert status. The 2nd year, it moves into the MSDE’s school improvement process described below.

For schools not making AYP, Maryland has a process in place to help them improve. In the past, the state identified low-performing, non-improving schools for local or state reconstitution. Title I schools were subject to additional accountability measures. Maryland has combined these separate processes into one statewide process of improvement. After two consecutive years of not making AYP, schools enter School Improvement, the first phase of the state improvement process.

School Improvement

Once identified for improvement, schools must develop two-year school improvement plans designed to improve each subgroup’s achievement. Title I schools must offer public school choice. If schools do not make AYP after one year of being in School Improvement, they remain in it for a second year. During the second year, all schools will continue with their school improvement plans. Title I schools must continue school choice and begin offering supplemental services (e. g., tutoring) to economically disadvantaged students. Schools not making AYP after a second year of School Improvement will be identified for Corrective Action.

Corrective Action

Local school systems will direct changes in schools in Corrective Action. These changes could include replacing school staff, adopting a new curriculum, decreasing school-level management authority, and extending the school day or year. Title I schools must continue to offer school choice and supplemental services. Schools not making AYP after one year of Corrective Action will be identified for Restructuring.

Restructuring

Restructuring involves at least one of the following:

- Replacing all or most school staff that are relevant to the failure to make AYP.
- Contracting with a management company to operate the school.
- Reopening the school as a public charter school.
- Instituting other major restructuring actions that involve significant changes to staffing and governance.

Exiting

After one year of making AYP, the school holds its status in the improvement process. If it makes AYP the next year, it will exit. If it does not make AYP, it will move to the next step in the improvement process. If, after exiting, a school does not make AYP two consecutive years, it will enter the improvement process from the beginning.

What happens if a school improves in the areas where it missed AYP, but then misses in another area?

That school will still move to the next step in School Improvement. For example, a school that missed AYP in reading for one subgroup in 2003 and in 2004 met AYP in that cell, but missed AYP in mathematics for another subgroup would still be considered to have not met AYP. This school would move to the next step in school improvement.

If the school system thinks the school should have met AYP, is there anything that can be done?

If a school is incorrectly identified for AYP, the school system can file an appeal with MSDE. However, missing AYP because of one student would not be an adequate reason for filing an appeal. [And yes, there are schools that miss AYP by one student's score.] An AYP appeal would need to be based on the miscoding of students' records that resulted in students being placed in the incorrect cell or inaccurate records of enrollment. Schools are held accountable only for students who have been enrolled in their school from September 30th until the time of testing. If a student enrolled after September 30th, the school is not accountable for his/her test scores during that year. Appeals must include documentation to prove there was an error.

How can parents help schools achieve AYP?

Parents are important partners in student achievement. Support for children and the schools are vital. Most importantly, parents can make sure their child attends school during testing; otherwise, the child may automatically receive a basic score. Parents also can talk to school staff members for ideas and suggestions to support their child. Additionally, the MSDE Web site (www.marylandpublicschools.org) offers many suggestions for parents.

Making AYP is challenging. It is disheartening to a school to be labeled "failing" when AYP is not achieved, since this may be because of one child in one cell. Parents can help by remembering that there are many factors to consider when evaluating a school—test scores are just one measure. If a school does not make AYP, do not rush to judgment. It is important for parents to become involved with the school and seek ways to support the school's improvement efforts.