



No
Child
Left
Behind

A
Toolkit
for
Communicating
about
Adequate
Yearly
Progress

under the "No Child Left Behind" Act

*Compiled by the Michigan School Public Relations Association
in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Education*





March 14, 2003

Dear Educational Stakeholder:

It is with great pleasure that the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA), in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Education, presents **A Toolkit For Communicating About Adequate Yearly Progress** to you.

This document provides educational professionals, administrators, parents, and communities at-large with relevant and reliable information regarding federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements, details on how AYP relates specifically to Michigan's schools, and how to communicate school building results to a wide variety of audiences.

The free toolkit also provides you with a communications template for sharing AYP results at the local and intermediate school district levels.

Many members of the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) contributed to the creation of this toolkit. This final product is reflective of the high-quality, cutting-edge work we have come to expect from the state's premier school communications organization.

The toolkit, available on-line at www.mspra.org, was first available to MSPRA members as a sneak peek benefit before being released to the general public. The Department of Education's web site also is linked to this toolkit.

For the latest information on No Child Left Behind, please visit the Department of Education's web site at www.michigan.gov/mde.

If you are interested in receiving MSPRA membership information, please visit the membership section of the MSPRA's web site.

Again, we hope you find this information valuable. Good luck to all of you as you continue to communicate AYP to your constituencies.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Koehler".

Ron Koehler
MSPRA President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Watkins".

Tom Watkins
Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction



Table of Contents

Using this Toolkit to Communicate about Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)	4
What is Adequate Yearly Progress?	6
Relating Key Messages about AYP	8
Proactive Communication for School Leaders	9
Talking Points for Superintendents	10
Questions and Answers for Building Principals	11
Questions and Answers for Board Members	12
Tips for Talking with the Media	13
Sample News Release	14
Sample AYP Parent Letter	15
Sample Article for School Publications	16
Sample Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Extension Letter	17
Local Communication Plan Ideas	18
Local No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Communications Plan Template	20
Glossary of Terms	24
Acknowledgments	25

These materials were developed, compiled and/or modified by members of the Michigan School Public Relations Association in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Education. We have drawn on a collection of materials, used with permission, including information from the North Carolina Public Schools web site. Thanks to all contributors. For more information about the Michigan School Public Relations Association visit: www.mspra.org.



Using this Toolkit to Communicate about Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Planning your Communication

- As you plan to communicate about Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), consider these questions:
 - What is your communication goal?
 - Who are your audiences?
 - What are the key messages you need to convey?
 - What vehicles will reach these audiences?
 - What timeframe will you follow?
 - Who will ensure the plan is carried out?
 - How will you know if people understood?
- Invite parents and community members in to discuss what AYP and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mean for your district, the challenges they present and what you're doing to improve achievement for all students.
- By communicating early and often with your parents, community and the media, you'll take the surprise out of AYP, create understanding about what schools are doing to comply and generate support for the work that needs to be done.
- When explaining complex programs like AYP and NCLB, face-to-face communication works best. This allows for two-way discussion and is more likely to result in messages being understood. **Use the Toolkit's Glossary of Terms on page 24 to aid in the community's understanding of these issues.**

Creating your Key Messages

See the Toolkit's Key Messages Section, page 8.

- Consider the major points of AYP and NCLB. How do they fit with Michigan's high standards for student achievement? How do they impact your schools?
- Work with your administrators and staff to:
 - Identify messages connecting AYP and NCLB to the goals/mission of your school district.
 - Identify what is challenging about AYP and NCLB for your school district.
 - Decide how you will meet these challenges, including new initiatives and policies.
 - Develop key talking points about the progress of your school district.
- Assume your audiences have little or no information about AYP and NCLB.
- Develop concise, clear messages. Don't overwhelm your audience with technical or complex details.

- Determine how you will pay for the materials, meetings and other ways you will communicate about AYP and NCLB. Partners (like Chambers of Commerce or associations) may be willing to share resources.

Determining Audiences and Vehicles

See the Toolkit's Communication Strategies Section, page 8.

- A Business Roundtable national poll in 2000 found that Americans pay "a lot of attention" to teachers and other parents for credible information about schools. Approximately 42 percent chose teachers as the most reliable source of information. That's why teachers and parents are likely to rank high on your local communication plan.
- Consider forming teams of AYP and NCLB communicators that include a business/community representative.
- Work with the education committee of your Chamber of Commerce to host an information session for business leaders on AYP and NCLB.
- Partner with your Chamber of Commerce to co-sponsor community briefings.
- Put information about AYP and NCLB in the Chamber of Commerce newsletter. **See the Sample Article in this Toolkit, page 16.**
- Education coalitions, parent-teacher organizations, the faith community and other community groups are natural partners in communicating about AYP and NCLB. Many of them can provide information, schedule speakers and coordinate special sessions.
- The focus on subgroup performance in AYP and NCLB means that groups representing the minority populations in your community will have a special interest in this law. Contact leaders of any minority-owned businesses, media, and organizations, including the faith community, to help you reach parents and community members.
- Many school systems hold community forums, produce publications, meet with advisory groups and coordinate with the news media to communicate important information. Use materials provided in this toolkit to include AYP and NCLB in these established communications vehicles.

(continued on next page)



Using this Toolkit to Communicate (continued)

Developing your Communication Plan

See the Toolkit's Communication Plan Ideas, page 18.

- A suggested communication plan is provided in this toolkit. Local teams will want to tailor the plan for their communities. By tailoring the plan, local teams can identify additional audiences, determine what communication vehicles can be used, and connect messages about AYP and NCLB to the goals of their school district.
- Videotape your superintendent, board president or other credible local person talking about how your system will meet the challenges of AYP and NCLB. Use this short video clip to start discussion sessions. Consider putting it on your web site along with other AYP information.
- Combine sample materials included in this toolkit with your key messages to reach your audiences.
- Link your school district's web site to the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) No Child Left Behind pages at www.michigan.gov/mde. The site is under continual development and will include Frequently Asked Questions, Communications Resources, links to other sites and the latest information on the new federal act.

Broadening your Communication Efforts

See the Toolkit's Sample Parent Letter, page 15.

- The AYP release will be a good time to provide more information about other aspects of NCLB.
- Title I schools have specific requirements for notification of parents about specific items. Make sure these schools are complying with the requirements.
- The U.S. Department of Education is still determining final rules and regulations for implementing NCLB. That's one reason why the NCLB "Frequently Asked Questions" page is constantly being updated. Regularly check MDE's web site for updates: www.michigan.gov/mde.

Evaluating your Communication Activities

- Some local school systems and education partners conduct surveys of public and parent views on education. Consider adding a question regarding understanding of the federal legislation. This might be a good addition to your web site.

- Tracking calls, e-mail contacts and evaluation form results from meetings and other sessions can help you gauge understanding of the issues.
- Requiring local school improvement plans to include AYP and NCLB communications may help ensure that principals and school improvement teams are doing their part to communicate about them.

For more Information about AYP/NCLB

- Official NCLB web site: www.nclb.gov
- NCLB newsletter: To subscribe, send an e-mail to: listproc@inet.ed.gov and write the following: "subscribe NoChildLeftBehind your first name your last name"
- Learning First Alliance web site: www.learningfirst.org/esea-related-resources.html
- The Achiever—biweekly NCLB newsletter: www.nclb.gov/Newsletter/index.html
- Free NCLB desktop reference (181 pages), go to: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reference.pdf>
- Public Education Network (PEN) NewsBlast has regular NCLB updates. To subscribe: www.publiceducation.org/tools-pubs.asp then click on NewsBlast.
- Education Week on the Web features NCLB articles: www.edweek.org/ew/
- Michigan Department of Education web site:
- Let the state know what other information you need to better communicate about AYP and NCLB. Contact TJ Bucholz at bucholztj@michigan.gov
- Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) web site has more information about AYP and NCLB communication **and updates to this toolkit**: www.mspra.org.

-end-



What is Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

What is Adequate Yearly Progress?

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is one of the cornerstones of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. In Michigan, it's a measure of year-to-year student achievement on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test. According to NCLB, Michigan and other states must develop target starting goals for AYP and the state must "raise the bar" in gradual increments so 100 percent of the students in the state are proficient on state assessments by the 2013-14 school year. Under federal law, school districts are required to test 95% of all students.
- NCLB also requires other indicators to be used in determining AYP. For elementary and middle schools in Michigan, attendance rates are used. For high schools, graduation rates are used. The State is still determining how attendance and graduation measures will be defined. It is expected that the 2002-03 AYP status schools receive in June 2003 will include these indicators.
- AYP applies to each district and school in the state; however, NCLB sanctions for schools that do not make AYP for two or more years in a row only apply to those districts and schools that receive Title I funds. Because Michigan had an AYP definition in place before 2001-02, Title I schools that did not make AYP prior to that year may be identified for corrective action as defined in NCLB.
- Each school receives its AYP status as a whole, but that's just part of the status report. Schools also receive their disaggregated AYP status for subgroups of students based on the following categories: race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and economically disadvantaged. According to the Michigan State Board of Education, each subgroup must include at least 30 students to ensure student confidentiality and statistical reliability.

How is AYP determined?

- Beginning with 2001-02 data, the State of Michigan will use the federal definition of AYP, which sets initial targets for proficiency (MEAP Levels 1 and 2) at the 20th percentile on statewide MEAP scores in math and reading. AYP is calculated based on each

content area separately (reading/language arts and math). The following table shows the target levels based on 2001-02 MEAP data.

Subject	Percent Proficient
Elementary Math	47
Elementary Reading	38
Middle School Math	31
Middle School Reading	31
High School Math	33
High School Reading	42

- There is one of two ways a school can make AYP.
 1. Schools must show all students, including subgroups, meet or exceed the established MEAP proficiency requirements in both math and reading to make AYP.
 2. For schools that do not make AYP, or have one or more subgroups that do not make AYP, there is a "safe harbor" provision in NCLB that can allow the school to make AYP if:
 - The percentage of students that didn't make AYP declined by at least 10 percent;
 - For high schools, the targeted increase in graduations was met;
 - For elementary schools, the targeted attendance rates were met; and
 - Progress was met on any additional indicators adopted by the state.
- To avoid uncharacteristic "swings" in which a single school's scores would negatively impact its AYP status, schools can average up to three years of MEAP student data to determine the percentage of students scoring proficient in math and reading.

What happens if schools do not make AYP?

Under NCLB, schools receiving Title I funding that do not make AYP for at least two years in a row face consequences that increase in severity for each year the school does not make AYP. Title I is a federal program that helps schools in areas of economic need. If a Title I school identified for consequences makes AYP for one year, then the school stays at the previous year's consequences. If a school makes AYP for two years in a row, the school is no longer identified for improvement, corrective action or restructuring.

(continued on next page)



What is Adequate Yearly Progress? (continued)

Schools **not** making AYP for two years in a row:

- Are identified for school improvement and must notify parents of their status.
- Must offer to allow students to transfer to a school within the district that makes AYP.
- Districts must pay for transportation **and may use** up to five percent of their Title I funds, unless a lesser amount is needed. Districts may use an additional 10 percent of Title I funds, if necessary; districts are not required to use other funds to meet the transportation requirement. If demand exceeds the amount of Title I funds available, priority is given to the lowest-achieving students from the lowest-income families.
- Will receive technical assistance to improve performance and **may** be eligible to receive federal funds for school improvement activities.
- Must implement a two-year school improvement plan.

Schools **not** making AYP for three years in a row:

- Are identified for their second year of school improvement and must notify parents of their status.
- Must continue offering school choice as described above.
- Must offer supplemental services (i.e. tutoring) to low-achieving students. A list of state-approved supplemental service providers is available from the Michigan Department of Education online at www.michigan.gov/documents/Approved_Provider_List_57806_7.pdf As with transportation, schools must pay for supplemental services with at least five percent of their Title I funds, unless a lesser amount is needed. If needed, an additional 10 percent of Title I funds must be used to cover the costs of school choice, supplemental services, or both. (Total Title I allocation to cover **transportation** and supplemental services is no more than 20 percent of Title I funds.)

Schools **not** making AYP for four years in a row:

- Are identified for corrective action and must notify parents of their status.
- Must continue to offer school choice and supplemental services as outlined above.
- Must follow one of the following options as selected by the school district:
 - Replace the school staff who are relevant to not making AYP;

- Implement a new curriculum and provide professional development;
- Significantly decrease management authority;
- Appoint outside expert to advise on school improvement plan;
- Extend school year or school day; or
- Restructure internal organization of school.

Schools **not** making AYP for five years in a row:

- Are identified for restructuring and must notify parents of their status.
- Must continue to offer school choice and transportation as outlined above.
- Must begin planning for restructuring (see below).

Schools **not** making AYP for six years in a row:

- Must implement restructuring.
- Must follow one of the following options as selected by the school district:
 - Reopen as a charter school;
 - Replace all or most of relevant school staff;
 - Contract with outside entity to operate school;
 - Undergo a state takeover, **if the state agrees**; or
 - Undertake any other major restructuring of school's governance that makes fundamental reform.

-end-



Relating Key Messages about AYP

Framing the NCLB Issue

- We, as educators, support the concept of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and will comply with this new law.
- We will continue to support Michigan's tradition of high academic standards and continuous school improvement while implementing NCLB — because we believe that all children can learn.
- Having high expectations for our students is not new. But how our schools are measured in the work of all its students is different under this new federal law.
- NCLB is a 1,000+ page legal document and ramifications aren't fully known. As it evolves, updates/links will be available on our district's web site.

Facts about the AYP Release

- AYP Reports under NCLB are scheduled to be released to schools **in March**.
- AYP is calculated using Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) math and reading tests for elementary, middle and high school.
- Target proficiencies for math and reading are the percent required in the federal definition.
- "Proficiency" is MEAP Level 1 and 2.
- Subgroups to be included (30 students tested on MEAP is the minimum at any grade level to be included in AYP).
- AYP reports will tell **if schools** have/have not met AYP. If not, the report will indicate what action(s) Title I schools need(s) to take.
- We need to be prepared to communicate in either instance since our community members will have questions about it.

Key Messages for Release of AYP

- Michigan is a national leader in setting high achievement standards for its students.
- AYP is based on MEAP results, but our students are learning much more than what's measured by the MEAP (a single test on a single day).
- We have a districtwide and building-specific plan to address improved student achievement, as required by Michigan law.
- We are using our school improvement plan, developed as required by Michigan law, to address our school improvement needs including those identified under NCLB.

- We're addressing the new NCLB requirements while we continue — in the midst of budget cuts — to do what's best for students.
- We'll use all the resources available to us to help our students achieve.
- We can't do this alone. Maintaining high quality schools is a job for the entire community. We need your help in reaching these goals.
- We want parent and community input. Contact your building principal to get involved.

Communication Strategies for AYP Release

- Take control of your communication early.
- Identify your target audiences (including staff, parents, community and the media).
- Communicate with them often.
- Avoid making district comparisons. (Don't brag if you met AYP. Don't make excuses if you didn't. Things can change quickly in the next AYP release, scheduled for June.)
- Avoid making building comparisons. Each has its strengths and challenges. Remember to note that school improvement is districtwide and building specific.
- Be proactive. Tell your story first.
 - This is how we're going to use the AYP report to be even better.
 - Here are the challenges/opportunities we face (include subgroups).
 - Here are the places we excel including our strengths and points of pride.
 - This is where we're going with the community's support.
- Inform school employees, unions, PTAs, boosters and other members of the school family so they can carry the message.
- Remind school employees they are public relations ambassadors for the schools.
- Use your district's communication vehicles to reach audiences, including: newsletters, memos, notes, lunch menus, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, school productions, key communicators, town hall meetings, web site, cable TV, unions, PTA councils, staff meetings.
- Always include a contact number or e-mail address where people can get more information.
- Provide regular reports at your board meetings.
- Invite the community in to "see for themselves" what our children are learning. -end-



Proactive Communication for School Leaders

Note: When speaking with parents, community leaders and the media, remember that there are no “failing schools.” This is **NOT** official language being used by anyone at the state or federal level and every effort needs to be made to correct use of that language by other educators, members of the media, community leaders, parents, etc. The schools “on the list” are those “in need of improvement” or are “under-performing.”

It is important to note the law does not use the term ‘failing’ schools, ” according to Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, 10-22-02, “because in some cases, schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ may, in fact, be succeeding in some measures. What’s important is that we know these schools are capable of getting better results for their students.”

Be Proactive in your Communication

Here are ways you can be proactive in your communication with staff, parents and community leaders:

- Explain that the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a list of schools that need improvement. **See “What is Adequate Yearly Progress?” in this Toolkit on page 6.**
- Remember to explain these reports to ALL school staff members including school secretaries, bus drivers, custodians and food service staff. Local residents will seek out the opinions and knowledge of school staff at local grocery stores, churches, community events, parties and other informal settings.
- Tell school staff, students, parents and community leaders whether or not your building(s) expect(s) to be on the NCLB AYP list and the associated required actions **BEFORE** they read about it in the newspaper.
- You have a story to tell about the strengths and challenges of each school building and the steps that have been taken toward improving student achievement. Tell your school’s story **BEFORE** the media does through building newsletters, web sites, message boards, and small group meetings with staff, parents and community leaders. Be sure to mention specific things the staff, students, parents and community members can do to help improve student achievement.
- Each principal may want to create a one-page written statement (your school’s story) that can be

approved by the superintendent in advance of the release of AYP. This statement can be shared with staff, parents and community leaders. It can also be included in building newsletters. If approved, this statement can be faxed in response to media inquiries.

- Each principal may want to craft at least three key messages s/he wants people to remember about the school’s data. Ask yourself: “What’s the message here? How are we doing?” Make sure these messages are clear, concise and honest. Communicate them to staff, parents and community leaders.
- Do not refer to your school or to any others as “failing.” If we in education use this word, others will think it is accurate. The schools “on the list” are those “in need of improvement.”
- Meet with staff to brainstorm a list of specific things staff are doing/can do to help improve student achievement. Have your school improvement team send an encouraging memo and this list to all staff members. Every member of your school staff may want to sign this list showing their commitment to improving student achievement. The list can be shared in district newsletters or can be posted within the school building. Revisit the list at periodic staff meetings.
- Meet with parents to review the parent involvement policy (Title I schools) and brainstorm a list of specific things parents can do to help improve student achievement. Have your parent advisory board sign this list and distribute to other parents. Ask the parent advisory board to revisit the list and come up with ways to encourage parents to take action. Note that NCLB 115 STAT. 1503 lists the following parent responsibilities: “monitoring attendance, homework completion, television watching, volunteering in their child’s classroom, participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time.”
- Principals may want to identify and meet with key members of the neighborhood in which their school building is located. Brainstorm a list of things these neighbors can do to help. Ask one leader to spearhead this community group to ensure that action is taken.

-end-



Talking Points for Superintendents

What you should know about your district's results:

1. Exactly which (if any) Title I school buildings in your district are on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) list of schools needing improvement.
2. How many years in a row each building did not make AYP.
3. What required actions are necessary for each school building.
4. A general knowledge of current school improvement initiatives going on at each school building on the needs improvement list.
5. A list of strengths for each school building on the needs improvement list.

The following are points you can make with parents, community leaders and media:

Members of the media are eagerly awaiting the release of AYP. Extensive media coverage is inevitable.

The media will most likely contact school districts with a very high number of school buildings on the AYP list of schools needing improvement, or they will contact school districts with very few or no buildings on the list.

The reports will contain easy to reproduce lists of "winners" and "losers."

Talk to reporters when they call. Remember they are just doing their jobs. Use this as an opportunity to educate the media and your community about the opportunities and challenges NCLB presents. Keep your comments positive. Avoid making excuses, self-serving responses and comparisons to others. Avoid making district comparisons. (Don't brag if you make AYP.)

Be sure to note:

1. NCLB calls for universal high performance on achievement tests for all students.
2. Every state is required to define its own standards, testing requirements, and AYP targets within strict standards approved by the federal government.
3. Some states that have been in violation of previous federal regulations may not have any schools on the AYP list of schools needing improvement.

4. Because Michigan has tracked AYP carefully for many years, we will likely have a larger number of schools on the list of schools needing improvement.
5. As with any new legislation that is sweeping and complex, it will take a couple of years to fully understand what schools must do to comply.
6. We are certain in future years adjustments will be made to NCLB to improve aspects of the law, since a lot of the details remain unclear at this time.
7. We accept and acknowledge that AYP reports are one more added source of information to help schools improve.
8. We'll factor the AYP report along with other achievement information into our existing school improvement process to ensure all of our schools are providing the best possible education for our children.
9. We need good state policy to help schools meet AYP. We need to seek solutions to help schools reach the students who are hardest to educate.
10. We have a local plan working with our buildings, district and intermediate school district to meet the challenges of No Child Left Behind.
11. We need the state and federal government to realize that mandates without resources make reforms difficult to achieve. The state and federal budget are in deficit. Will resources be forthcoming as promised? Schools that need improvement also need additional resources.
12. We intend to make progress "not excuses" – but we need resources to overcome our challenges.
13. We invite the media, our parents and the community to "come in and see" what our students are learning. And, we encourage them to work with us as we continually improve our schools.

-end-



Questions and Answers for Building Principals

Prepare for the release of AYP reports

Anticipate questions your parents, community leaders and local media will ask. Talk with your superintendent about who should speak to the press **BEFORE** your building gets media calls.

Note: When speaking with parents, community leaders and the media, remember that there are no “failing schools.” This is **NOT** official language being used by anyone at the state or federal level and every effort needs to be made to correct use of that language by other educators, members of the media, community leaders, parents, etc. The schools “on the list” are those “in need of improvement” or are “under-performing.”

It is important to note the law does not use the term ‘failing’ schools, ” according to Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, 10-22-02, “because in some cases, schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ may, in fact, be succeeding in some measures. What’s important is that we know these schools are capable of getting better results for their students.”

What you should know about your building results:

1. Whether your school building receives Title I funding and if it’s on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) list of schools needing improvement.
2. How many years in a row your building did not make AYP.
3. If your building is a Title I school, what required actions, if any, are necessary under NCLB.
4. Knowledge of the current school improvement initiatives going on in your school building.
5. A list of strengths for your school building.

Questions Building Principals may be asked:

- Q:** Why is your building on/off the list when (fill in school name within or outside of your district) is on/off the list? Why did your school do so much better/worse than School B?
- A:** I only have first-hand knowledge of my own school building and wouldn’t know about (fill in school name).
- Q:** What changes will you be making as a result of the AYP report?
- A:** Provide details of current and planned initiatives noting that improvement strategies have already been underway. Bring out strengths: “We have had

a strong focus on mathematics, an area we have greatly improved upon. Now as we turn our attention to reading/language arts, we expect the same great results.”

- Q:** Will you be making any staff changes as a result of this rating?
- A:** No staff changes will be made as a direct result of this report. We will continue to base our staffing decisions on student needs, budget issues and a variety of other data we have gathered.
- Q:** Your district just passed a large measure to pay for your new facility/facility improvements. What will you say to them now that you were found to be a school in need of improvement?
- A:** We recognize we are a school in need of improvement based on AYP criteria. We also know the technology improvements, better heating and ventilation systems, and new state-of-the-art classrooms will have a positive impact on student achievement. The community’s funding for this measure is a critical part of our improvement process.
- Q:** Why is it that your school building’s performance has received awards (e.g., Golden Apple or Blue Ribbon) or received high marks under the state’s accreditation system, yet the federal government has declared your school as needing improvement?
- A:** We’re working hard to create the proper context for student learning and we’re doing a lot of things right. That’s evident by the awards and recognition our school has received. We will continue to use proven research-based methods to improve upon our results. And, we’ll ask our staff, parents and students to help us with those improvements.
- Q:** Your school was on the original list of 1,315 schools that didn’t meet AYP and now it’s not. Why?
- A:** At that time, the list was compiled using Michigan’s definition of AYP **under the previous legislation**. The most recent list was compiled using the **new** federal definition of AYP and our school meets that standard, so we’re not on the list. However, in the spirit of No Child Left Behind, we are continuing to measure our school improvement efforts using Michigan’s high achievement standards so that the children in our community will continue to receive the best possible education we can offer. -end-



Questions and Answers for Board Members

The media will most likely contact school districts with a very high number of school buildings on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) list of schools in need of improvement, or they will contact school districts with very few or no buildings on the list.

Q: Are you aware the federal government has identified ___ number of schools in your district as “in need of improvement”? What’s your reaction to this?

A: Yes, I am aware of this. Our superintendent has briefed us on the AYP status of our buildings. As board members we are kept informed of our building’s MEAP scores and the work of the school improvement teams.

Q: Why does your school district have ___ number of buildings on the list when X school district has none/many? Why did your school district do so much better/worse than that other school district?

A: I only have first-hand knowledge of my own school district and don’t know about (fill in school name).

Q: How have your parents reacted to the AYP report that lists several of your buildings as needing improvement?

A: Our parents have always been concerned about student growth and learning, even before the AYP report was issued. We continue to welcome their input and questions. We count on them to continue their support and involvement. It’s a critical part of our improvement process.

Q: Your school district has no buildings on the AYP list of schools needing improvement. Why are you doing so much better?

A: Every district faces its own unique issues and challenges. Our district is really not that different from any other public school district in the way that we all work hard to do the very best we can for all children.

Q: What changes will you be making as a result of the AYP report?

A: Provide an overview of current and planned initiatives noting that improvement strategies have already been underway. Bring out strengths: “Our district has been heavily involved with school improvement strategies and that focus will become even stronger within school buildings that did not meet AYP targets.”

Q: How will you respond to parents who want to know why your buildings need improvement?

A: The AYP report is based on one measurement – The Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) reading/language arts and math. We are already taking measures to improve in this area; however, our students are more than MEAP scores. We evaluate our students in all sorts of ways beyond the MEAP including student projects, oral assessments, and observations. We are proud of the many accomplishments and successes our students have achieved.

Q: Will you be making any staff changes as a result of this rating?

A: Every school year, we base our staffing decisions on student needs, budget issues, and a variety of data we have gathered. That process will not change.

Q: Your district just passed a large measure to pay for your new facility/facility improvements. What will you say to your community now that you have schools in need of improvement?

A: We recognize we have (a) school building(s) in need of improvement based on AYP criteria. We also know that the technology improvements, better heating and ventilation systems, and new state-of-the-art classrooms will have a positive impact on student achievement. The community’s funding for this measure is a critical part of our improvement process.

Q: Because your school building(s) has (have) not met AYP targets for 4(5) years in a row, which corrective actions will you be forced to take?

A: Clearly the law requires us to take action, but we will not “react.” We will look carefully at each of our options within the required time frame. We will choose the action that best serves our children and is the right choice for each building.

Q: We’ve spoken to superintendents in other districts who plan to take ___ action as a result of the AYP requirements for schools in need of improvement. Do you plan to do this, too?

A: We know every district will continue to take action to improve student achievement in ways that best serve the needs of their children. We too will determine what actions will be best for our children within the required time frame. -end-



Tips for Talking with the Media

General Media Considerations

Note: When speaking with parents, community leaders and the media, remember that there are no “failing schools.” This is **NOT** official language being used by anyone at the state or federal level and every effort needs to be made to correct use of that language by other educators, members of the media, community leaders, parents, etc. The schools “on the list” are those “in need of improvement” or are “under-performing.”

It is important to note the law does not use the term ‘failing’ schools, ” according to Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, 10-22-02, “because in some cases, schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ may, in fact, be succeeding in some measures. What’s important is that we know these schools are capable of getting better results for their students.”

Tips for talking with the Media about AYP

- Prepare media packets and include facts, figures, and program information about your school. Include annual reports and/or other easy-to-understand publications. Have these materials on hand at all times.
- Once you know the results of your Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report, determine three key messages and prepare related talking points to make sure these messages are concisely and consistently presented to the media.
- Include the board and staff as part of the communication team and make sure they have access to the talking points so everyone is communicating the same messages.
- Hold media interviews in an active program location, not the superintendent’s or principal’s office. Let them see, firsthand, the student- and teacher-driven activities that are taking place in your building(s).
- Make sure all the information you share with the media and your various publics is factual, straightforward and consistent. Stick to the facts.
- Establish an audience target before meeting with the media; get a clear message of who needs to hear the message to reach your goal.

- Use language geared toward your target audience. Use analogies or school-based stories to get your message across.
- Respond to your situation only; refrain from speculating or offering opinions about the results of other districts.
- Answer each question and then be silent. Refrain from embellishing your comments and resist subtle pressure to chat about them.
- Don’t dwell on the problem(s); emphasize what you are doing to improve a given situation(s).
- If the media uses negative language, do not repeat it in your response. Be mindful of negative buzzwords such as “failing.”
- If a negative question is asked, “bridge” your response to the message you want to convey.
- Always remain positive. This is an opportunity to provide great clarity about what your district does and whom you serve.
- If you have questions about communicating with the media or need assistance, contact the person in your district responsible for media relations, call your intermediate school district or contact the Michigan School Public Relations Association at www.mspra.org.

-end-



Sample News Release

CONTACT: District Media Relations Contact
Person Name XXX/XXX-XXXX, ext. XXX
ISSUED: March XX, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Continuing High Standards **Example Public Schools Target Student Success**

“The goal of **Example Public Schools** is to prepare children to succeed in school and in life,” **Example Public Schools Superintendent NAME** said.

“We continue to support Michigan’s tradition of high academic standards and continuous school improvement while implementing No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act,” **NAME** said.

NCLB, signed into law by President Bush in January 2002, requires states to set target goals for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) based on 2001-02 student achievement data. States are required to “raise the bar” for AYP each year to meet the NCLB goal of having all students, including nine different subgroups of students, proficient in reading and math by the 2013-14 school year. The Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test serves as the basis for calculating AYP in Michigan.

Under NCLB, it’s important for schools as a whole to meet target AYP goals. Additionally, all subgroups in a school must meet the target goals; if even one group does not meet the AYP target goals, the school will not make AYP. Schools receiving Title I funding, a federal program that provides resources to schools in areas of economic need, could face sanctions under NCLB if the school does not make AYP for two or more years in a row. Sanctions increase in severity for every year a Title I school does not make AYP.

More than _____ percent of **Example Public School** students demonstrated proficiency in reading and mathematics. The percentage of students proficient in both reading and mathematics for **student subgroups ranged** from ___ to ___ percent.

Name said the school district has several programs already in place to help every student achieve at higher proficiency levels. LIST PROGRAMS IN PLACE AND PROGRAMS THAT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED.

“Our district-wide school improvement plan, developed as required under Michigan law, addresses our school improvement needs, including those identified under NCLB,” **Name** said.

Example Public Schools has experienced increased academic success under Michigan’s high standards and expects to continue to do so. “But it’s going to take every school administrator, teacher, student, parent and the community working together to ensure no **Example public school** student is left behind,” **Name** said.

Example Public Schools encourages all community members, including parents, business leaders and retirees to get involved in helping students succeed.

For more information, contact: **NAME** at XXX/XXX-XXXX or send an e-mail to: _____, or go to the district’s web site: www._____

###



Sample AYP Parent Letter

(Sample letter)

Dear Parent:

As you know, our school and school district are dedicated to providing all students with the educational foundation necessary to succeed in school and in life. To ensure your child's success, we have set high standards that are reflected in what is taught in our classrooms. While holding high expectations for our students is not new, the way our school and student achievement is measured and reported will be different under a new federal law known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

No Child Left Behind was signed into law on January 8, 2002, by President Bush. It represents the federal government's largest expansion and involvement in K-12 education. Two of the most prominent and highly publicized components of this new federal legislation include provisions of limited "school choice" and "supplemental education services" for students attending schools that have been identified as needing improvement for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two or more years in a row. Adequate Yearly Progress is based on students' assessment results on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) test. The following schools in our district have been identified as needing improvement: LIST SCHOOLS.

Under No Child Left Behind, students at the following schools, LIST SCHOOLS, may apply for transfer to designated schools within SCHOOL DISTRICT that have made AYP. If you exercise the option of transferring your child to schools making AYP within DISTRICT and your child is eligible, the school district has certain obligations to provide or pay for transportation to the new school.

Students at schools identified as needing improvement for a second year in the same content area are eligible to receive tutoring, or supplemental education services. Students at the following schools are eligible for these services: LIST SCHOOLS. These services are over and above those ordinarily provided in the regular classroom during the regular school day. Parents interested in this provision must choose a state-approved provider; a list is enclosed and/or available at LOCATION. If you

exercise this option and your child is eligible, the school may be obligated to pay for these services.

If you would like your child to be considered for transfer and/or supplemental services during the 2002-03 school year, please notify the school principal in writing no later than DATE. You will be contacted to further discuss the specifics of your request. If you wish for your child to remain at his/her current school, no action on your part is required.

We want to continue serving your child, and we'll use all the resources available to us to help our students achieve. We are using our school improvement plan, developed as required by Michigan law, to address our school improvement needs, including those identified under No Child Left Behind. But building and maintaining a high quality school is a job for the entire community, and we need your help in reaching these goals. We encourage you to provide input as we strive to help our students succeed now and in the future. To get involved with your school, contact NAME and CONTACT INFORMATION.

Sincerely,

-end-



Sample Article for School Publications

No Child Left Behind's Impact on our School

Our school is dedicated to making sure all children succeed in school and in life. We're proud of programs like [CITE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF HIGH STANDARDS OR ACHIEVEMENTS HERE] that help students at our school learn. But the way our school and student achievement is measured and reported will be different under the federal law known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It's important for you to understand how this law affects our school and our students.

NCLB, signed into law by President Bush in January 2002, is the federal government's largest ever expansion into our local schools. While we support the concept of NCLB and will fully comply with this new law, it is very complicated and will require an enormous effort by our school, school district and state to implement.

Under NCLB, a measure known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is used to report student progress on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) reading and math tests. By the 2013-2014 school year, all students in Michigan are supposed to be successful on the MEAP test according to NCLB.

Each year, our school will receive a report from the state that shows our AYP status. The report will include students' scores for the entire school, but that's only part of the rating. The report will also break students' scores into different subgroups, including race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and economically disadvantaged. Individual student scores will not appear on the report.

If our school does not make AYP in every category, does that mean our school is a bad school? Absolutely not! AYP is mostly based on MEAP results, and our students are learning much more than what's measured by a single test on a single day. It's important for parents to understand their child's day-to-day progress in the classroom.

FOR NON-TITLE I SCHOOLS ONLY:

Some schools that do not make AYP may have to offer public school choice within the district, provide tutoring to students or face other sanctions as called for by NCLB. Schools facing those sanctions receive Title I funding; our school does not.

We are using our school improvement plan, developed as required by Michigan law, to address our school improvement needs, including those identified under NCLB. Our school is currently working on [LIST SPECIFIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS HERE] to make our school even better.

We can't do this alone. Maintaining high quality schools is a job for the entire community, and we need your help in reaching these goals. If you would like to get involved contact your building principal at [CONTACT INFORMATION].

FOR TITLE I SCHOOLS ONLY:

Our school receives Title I funding. Title I is a federal program that provides resources to schools in areas of economic need. NCLB focuses on schools, like ours, that receive Title I funding.

Under NCLB, every school receiving Title I money is required to notify parents of their rights to request and receive the following information from the school:

- Professional qualifications of their child's teacher(s) including degrees/certifications held and whether the teacher is certified in the area he/she is teaching.
- Whether or not their child is receiving instruction by a paraprofessional, and if so, his/her qualifications. This applies to all instructional staff in the school, not just those paid with Title I funds.

NCLB also says that Title I schools must notify parents:

- About the school improvement status of their child's school. Title I schools that do not meet AYP for at least two years in a row may be required to offer students public school choice within the district or **other services such as** tutoring. Schools that continue to be identified for improvement may be listed for corrective action.
- Of their child's achievement level on the MEAP test.
- If their child has been assigned or taught for at least four consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet the highly qualified definition.
- Of their right to be involved in the planning and implementation of the parent involvement program in their school.

We are using our school improvement plan to examine the challenges facing our school, including those identified under NCLB. Some of the things we are doing to make our school better, include [LIST SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS HERE].

We need your help to make sure all children are successful in school and in life. By working together as a community, we'll overcome our challenges and build the bright future our children deserve. If you'd like to get involved, contact your building principal.

FOR ALL SCHOOLS:

If you have questions about No Child Left Behind and its impact on our school, please contact [NAME] at [CONTACT INFORMATION] or visit

www.nochildleftbehind.gov.

-end-



Sample Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Extension Letter

When the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reports are released to schools, it is the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) intent that all districts will have ten business days to review their data and do their own error check.

The following is a template for a Freedom of Information Act extension letter which your district may use should any media outlet or other entity ask you to release your data earlier than MDE intends.

[Date]

Mr./Ms. Requester
Main Street
Hometown, MI 49098

Dear Mr./Ms. Requester:

This is in response to your March ____ request for records under the Freedom of Information Act, which was received March _____. You requested a copy of a correspondence that was received from the Michigan Department of Education that discusses the status of the district's schools in relation to achieving adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Pursuant to MCL 15.235, we are giving you notice of our intent to extend the period in which we must provide the requested record for ten additional business days. Because the letter from the Department of Education provides the school district with an opportunity to review the adequate yearly progress information prior to its public release, we need the additional ten business days to evaluate the letter's contents to ensure that it includes accurate information. Therefore, we plan to grant your request and provide you with the requested record on March ____ [10 business days after this response].

If you have any additional questions, please contact _____ [district's FOIA Coordinator] at _____.

Sincerely,



-end-

Local Communication Plan Ideas

Suggested local target audiences:

1. School/district employees
2. Parents
3. Business leaders and employees
4. Media
5. Elected and/or Government officials
6. Civic and nonprofit groups
7. Faith community
8. Students

Audience	Communications Vehicles
<p>1. School/district employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At beginning of the year convocations, district-wide or school-wide, focus on the new federal law and how Michigan is responding. • Link the school district and individual school web sites to the state site. www.michigan.gov/mde. • Hold information sessions for School Improvement Teams and ask teams to coordinate No Child Left Behind (NCLB) information sessions at individual schools. • Work with principals and assistant principals on data disaggregation. • Coordinate local release of Michigan School Report Cards so principals and others will be ready for the dissemination. • Provide information and set up an interview session for superintendents or another central office representative with student newspaper editors.
<p>2. Parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the local Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) council or consider meeting with all PTA/PTO presidents and other officers to discuss NCLB. • Meet with parents in Title I schools; possibly hold these meetings out in the community to inform them of the specific requirements and the sanctions of NCLB for these schools. • Ask parent-teacher groups to discuss NCLB at their meetings. • Make sure guidance counselors, nurses and others who have contact with parents are aware of the new federal law in case parents inquire. • Conduct meetings with groups of parents by grade level, proficiency level, or in neighborhoods. • Provide copies of teachers' biographies for parents at the beginning of the year. Encourage teachers to post their diploma(s) in their classrooms. • Hold a "fair" or other event so parents can learn more about what school choices are available.



Local Communication Plan Ideas (continued)

Audience	Communication Vehicles
3. Business leaders and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a speakers' bureau of local speakers on NCLB, train them and contact major employers to arrange work site presentations. • Coordinate communications efforts with the local chamber of commerce education committee. • Identify minority and women-owned businesses and ask for their help in informing employees.
4. Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for the superintendent, board chairman or others involved in responding to NCLB to meet with editorial boards of local newspapers. • Provide a media kit for local reporters.
5. Elected and/or Government Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite legislators to a breakfast or lunch at a school and talk about the challenges and opportunities posed by the new federal legislation. • Encourage school board members and county commissioners to attend state-level meetings on No Child Left Behind. • Hold your own information session for local leaders, possibly co-sponsored with the city/county manager, to discuss NCLB.
6. Civic and nonprofit groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact sororities and fraternities, the local chapter of the NAACP, alumni associations and other active groups to arrange for speakers and materials distribution. Ask for their help in making sure no child is left behind in your community. • Develop a list of all civic organizations (i.e. Kiwanis, Jaycees, Women's Club, etc.) and ask members to share information on NCLB.
7. Faith community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge principals to use NCLB as a way to improve volunteer/mentor programs and opportunities with the local faith community. • Provide information for bulletin inserts, web site materials and sermons.
8. Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to insert in school newspapers or to use in student-produced announcements or television programs. • Include a principal's letter in the student handbook.



Local No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Communications Plan Template

Goal: _____

Identify the audiences who need to be reached and how No Child Left Behind will impact each of these audiences.

Audience	NCLB Impact on this Audience
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	



Prioritize the top six audiences in your list and determine the key messages for each

Top Six Audiences	Key Messages
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Anticipate questions and your responses.

Question	Suggested Response
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	



Identify the NCLB Communications Team

List those in your district who will be responsible for communicating about No Child Left Behind.

Name/Title	Assignment
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

Determine best ways to get your messages to each audience.

Audience	Communications Vehicles
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	



Prepare a Calendar

Record important NCLB events for each month.

2003 Dates	Activity/Event
January	
February	
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of AYP reports
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	

Evaluate Your Plan

Determine how successful you were at reaching audiences with your key messages.

Evaluation Means	Notes
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	



Glossary of Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): Adequate Yearly Progress is the minimum level of improvement that school districts and schools must achieve each year as determined under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Assessment: A method to measure what students are learning. A test is one kind of assessment schools use.

Corrective Action: When a Title I school or school district does not make Adequate Yearly Progress for four years in a row, **the district is required by federal law to submit a corrective action plan. The plan may include resources to improve teaching, administration, or curriculum.**

Disaggregated Data: “Disaggregate” means to separate a whole into its parts. In education, this term means that test results are sorted by groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic groups, have disabilities or have limited English proficiency. This practice allows parents and teachers to see more than just the average score for a student’s school. Instead, parents and teachers can see how each student group is performing.

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Limited English Proficient (LEP) refers to students for whom English is a second language and who are not reading or writing English at grade level.

Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP): In Michigan, the MEAP tests measure student progress in reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies. AYP will be calculated using MEAP math and reading/language arts tests for elementary, middle and high school.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): NCLB is the most recent authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is the principal federal law affecting K-12 education.

Parental Involvement: Parental involvement is the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students’ academic learning and other school activities. The involvement includes ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school;

that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.

Proficiency: Proficiency is mastery or the ability to do something at grade level.

Public School Choice: Students in Title I schools identified as needing improvement will have the option to transfer to a school within the district that makes AYP. The school district will be required to provide transportation to the students.

Restructuring: Title I schools not making AYP for six years in a row must follow one of the following restructuring options: reopen as a charter school; replace all or most of relevant school staff; contract with outside entity to operate school; state takeover; or any other major restructuring of school’s governance that makes fundamental reform.

Safe Harbor: “Safe Harbor” is a provision in No Child Left Behind intended for schools and districts that are making progress in student achievement but are not yet meeting target goals for Adequate Yearly Progress. It is designed to prevent the over-identification of schools not making AYP.

School Improvement Plan: The written school improvement plan for each school includes strategies for improving student performance in the targeted goal areas, taking into account the performance on multiple assessments; how and when improvements will be implemented; use of **federal and** state funds; requests for waivers, etc. Each school improvement plan must be approved by the local board and may be in effect for no more than three years. The plans may be amended as often as necessary or appropriate.

Student Subgroups: Schools will receive their disaggregated AYP status for subgroups of students based on the following categories: racial/ethnicity, students with disabilities, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and economically disadvantaged. According to the Michigan State Board of Education, each subgroup must include at least 30 students to ensure student confidentiality and statistical reliability.

(continued on next page)



Glossary of Terms

Supplemental Services: Students from low-income families who are attending Title I schools that have been identified as needing improvement for two years will be eligible to receive outside tutoring or academic assistance. Parents can choose the appropriate services for their child from a list of state approved providers. The school district will purchase the services.

Title I: Title I refers to a federal funding program aimed at students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I Part A funding provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of children in areas with high economic needs; it is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for the free lunch program. Title I is intended to supplement, not replace, state and district funds.

-end-

Acknowledgments

This document was made possible through the efforts of the following MSPRA members:
Gerri Allen, Diane Bauman, Pat Heinzman, Kristin Tank and Laura Wotruba

with assistance from:

Mimi Bell, TJ Bucholz, Kathleen Booher, Linda Brown, Deb Clancy, Dick Egli, Jan Ellis, Ron Koehler, Patti McLaughlin, Carolyn Madden, William Miller, Jennifer Rogers, Ray Telman, Larry Thomas, and Don Wotruba

and some information gleaned from the North Carolina Public Schools' web site.