

CLUE UPDATE
Thursday, January 9, 2003

State Board Approves AYP Definition

Yesterday marked the first anniversary of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*, so it is only fitting that the State Board of Education yesterday approved a number of recommendations which are key components related to implementation of NCLB. California's application outlining the state's accountability plan to the United States Department of Education (USDOE) must be submitted no later than January 31, 2003. Once submitted, the application will undergo a federal peer review for approval, which is expected to take several months. The USDOE may require additional modifications to the state's accountability plan.

The significant actions taken by the Board culminated discussion and input by various interested parties over the past several months. The following briefly summarizes the Board's actions that were taken during yesterday's meeting.

Definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

The California Department of Education (CDE) had previously presented four options to the Board related to how best blend California's current Academic Performance Index (API) with new federal accountability requirements, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Of these options, the Board approved the option that would generally maintain the current API, while separately reporting AYP. This option has been deemed the "front page, back page" model, as it will supplement the API with an AYP report containing scoring for all significant subgroups in the two content areas of English/language arts and math. The API will be used to help classify school performance or possibly prioritize interventions.

Definition of "Proficient"

The state's accountability system centers on how "proficient" is defined and measured by California Standards Tests (CSTs). In order to conform to NCLB requirements, the Board had to re-examine the state's rigorous definition of proficient, which corresponds to college readiness at a four-year university.

The Board made two decisions yesterday with respect to defining proficient for federal purposes. First, the Board approved the recommendation that the current "proficient" level on the CSTs would serve as "proficient" for NCLB purposes for grades 2-8, while the CAHSEE would serve as the primary assessment in grade 10. The Board also approved an approach where CAHSEE performance levels for AYP would result in a proportion of students at proficient that is roughly equivalent to the proportion of students at proficient on the CST at the same grade.

Assessment Tests and Graduation Rate Calculation

NCLB requires high school assessment tests to measure knowledge and skills students must master regardless of grade level or courses taken. For this reason, the Board approved the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) be utilized as the core knowledge test for grades 10 through 12. Results from the 10th grade population will be submitted annually to report AYP.

NCLB also requires two cut scores and three performance levels for the state's chosen assessment test. The CAHSEE currently has one cut score and two performance levels (pass and fail). Therefore the exit exam will require additional review prior to setting an additional cut score and performance level.

Further, the Board approved the use of combined pass rates (reading/language arts and math) on the CAHSEE as a proxy for high school graduation rates. Specifically, the CAHSEE would be utilized until such a time when the California School Information Services (CSIS) would be in place, providing a more accurate collection of student data related to high school graduation.

Issues Related to Subgroups

There are four specific issues related to subgroups that were addressed by the Board: 1) accountability for schools with fewer students than the minimum subgroup size, 2) determination of minimum subgroup size for accountability purposes, 3) NCLB subgroup requirements, and 4) mobility.

Firstly, NCLB requires state's to determine a minimum subgroup size in order to best produce valid accountability results. California has three types of schools that must be considered in this category: 1) schools without STAR scores, which are typically kindergarten or K-1 schools, 2) schools with fewer students than the required minimum subgroup size enrolled for a full academic year, and 3) small schools with enrollment less than the state's required number of subgroup size.

The Board approved a policy that scores from these identified schools to be included in a district's accountability measure.

Secondly, the Board approved setting the minimum subgroup size at 50 students or at least 15% or 100 students. This issue will have to be revisited in the event that the USDOE insists on the use of a single minimum number.

Thirdly, the Board approved the addition of two subgroups, English Language Learners and disabled students, to be included in the state's API. According to department staff, this addition, while technically possible by Board action, may require legislation. Definitions of what constitute an ELL or disabled student have yet to be finalized.

Lastly, federal requirements contain specific rules related to student mobility that dictate where students should be counted with regard to a state's accountability system. NCLB specifies that if a student attends more than one school within a district but is enrolled in the district for a full academic year, that student should be counted at the district. Highly mobile students who

have not been continuously enrolled in any district for a full year should be counted at the state level.

These rules are different from the state's API and would require legislation to alter California's system to reflect the new changes under NCLB. The Board approved the recommendation that the state adopt the necessary changes to conform the state's definition of mobility to that of NCLB.

Student Participation Rates

NCLB requires a 95% participation rate of students taking assessment tests and applies to all schools and subgroups for each of the two content areas. If any school fails to reach this goal, that school would fail to meet its AYP. API currently requires 95% participation rate at elementary and middle schools, 90% participation rate at high schools, and does not require the calculation of significant subgroups.

The Board voted to increase the participation rate from 90% to 95% at the high school level, as well as approve the calculation of such rates for all subgroups.

District Accountability

Under NCLB, districts are subject to specific requirements and consequences if it fails to make AYP. Those districts that do not make AYP for two consecutive years become Program Improvement (PI) districts and are subject to similar interventions and potential corrective action as schools.

The Board approved the department's recommendation that a district's accountability measure consist of a "student roll-up". Specifically, a district would receive an AYP report containing the percentage of students in the district who are performing at or above proficient in each content area, with the API used as an additional indicator. Scores would be based upon all students who were enrolled in the district for a full academic year.

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