



NJDOE News

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DOE Announces *NCLB*-Designated Districts In Need of Improvement

The New Jersey Department of Education today announced that 30 school districts and three charter schools were notified that they have been designated as "Districts in Need of Improvement," based on the assessments of achievement of their students as calculated under an approved formula mandated by the federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*.

These districts were identified because they met three statistical criteria:

- First, when the scores of all students in the three tested grades in all schools in the district were aggregated, the district did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years (2002-2003 and 2003-2004) in the same subject at all grade levels.
- Second, when the students' scores were disaggregated by school, half the schools in the district did not make AYP in 2004.
- And third, when any of the schools that did not make AYP in 2004 achieved fewer than 90 percent of the 40 indicators each school is required to meet.

"While we are pleased that only about five percent of New Jersey's 593 operating school districts have been deemed to be 'In Need of Improvement' by *NCLB* standards, we are very concerned about the sanctions that these districts will be facing if the performance of their students does not improve over the next two years," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera.

"The situation is further complicated by the fact that the *NCLB* law dictates that the percentage of students achieving proficiency on each test increases in 2005, so more students will have to do well this year in order for the school or district to achieve AYP. In other words, the bar just got higher," he said.

The Commissioner said that the stronger focus on achievement by administrators, teachers and parents, and the improving level of understanding about the use of data in making better decisions on teaching and learning were factors that contributed to better test performances in many districts.

"But while accountability is a laudable goal, it's very important to remember that, in terms of AYP, *NCLB* has imposed a very complicated calculation, reporting and evaluation process, an inaccurate labeling system and a very ambitious goal of 100 percent proficiency in math and language arts by all students by 2014," said Commissioner Librera, who repeated his frequently-stated concerns about the manner in which the federal government requires New Jersey and other states to implement the law.

Seven of the districts appealed the designations. Three of the appeals were denied. The appeal status of the other four districts will be resolved within a week, and they will be identified at that time.

The 26 remaining districts are: Atlantic City, Buena Regional (appeal denied), Hammonton, Lenape Regional, Camden City, Camden County Vocational (appeal denied), Winslow Township, Middle Township, East Orange, Essex County Technical, Irvington, Newark, Jersey City, Trenton, Middlesex County Vocational, New Brunswick, Asbury Park, Freehold Regional, Long Branch, Morris School District, Central Regional, Lakewood, Paterson, Franklin Township in Somerset County (appeal denied), North Plainfield and Plainfield.

The three charter schools are Academy Charter High School in South Belmar, Liberty Academy Charter School in Jersey City and Lady Liberty Academy Charter School in Newark. For the purposes of *NCLB* calculations, each of New Jersey's charter schools is considered to be an independent, one-school district.

Administrators in the designated districts must immediately:

- Notify all parents that the district has been designated as being in need of improvement.
- Develop and implement a district improvement plan.
- Allocate ten percent of the federal Title I funding the district receives to professional development for

teachers.

If the districts do not make progress over the next two years, *NCLB* mandates that more severe sanctions be imposed. These could include requirements that the district experience a deferral or reduction in federal funding, institute and implement a new curriculum or replace administrators or teachers deemed relevant to the inability of the district to make progress.

In addition, individual schools could be removed from the district, receivers or trustees could be appointed to administer its affairs, parents could be offered the choice of sending their children to schools in other districts, or the district could be restructured or abolished.

The DOE Title I Office has already held one technical assistance session for the districts. Additional sessions are planned.

For a list of the 26 districts and three charter schools, click here:

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/title1/accountability/dini/list.pdf>

To see the summary charts for the 26 districts and three charter schools, click here:

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/title1/accountability/dini/profile.pdf>

For a copy of the letter that was sent to the districts advising them of their designation, click here:

<http://www.nj.gov/education/news/2005/011205dini.pdf>