

ESEA Alert

September 13, 2004

California Teachers Association- Negotiations and Organizational Development Department

School Districts in Program Improvement

(Source: CA Dept. of Ed., Sept. 2004)

The following school districts, serving over 100,000 CA students, failed to meet federal testing goals for the second year in a row:

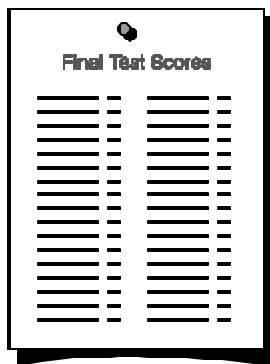
Centinela Valley Union H.S.– L.A. County
Oxnard Union H.S.– Ventura County
Coachella Valley Unified– Riverside County
Baker Valley Unified– San Bernardino County
Liberty Union H.S.– Contra Costa County
Reef-Sunset Unified– Kings County
Greenfield Union Elem.– Monterey County
Sequoia Union H.S.– San Mateo County
Earlhart Elementary– Tulare County
Alta Vista Elementary– Tulare County
Alpaugh Unified– Tulare County
Kern Union H.S.– Kern County
Delano Joint Union H.S.– Kern County
Washington Union H.S.– Fresno County
Golden Plains Unified– Fresno County
Coalinga-Huron Joint Unified– Fresno County
Santa Rosa H.S.– Sonoma County
Petaluma Joint Union H.S.– Sonoma County

Testing Data Reveals that School Quality, Like Beauty, is in the Eye of the Beholder

The recent release of statewide testing data by the California Dept. of Education revealed that 64% of California's 9,000+ public schools met their federal targets.

That was up from 54% last year– largely because more high schools met required student participation rates on the tests. High schools, which are more likely to miss their AYP targets, are the subject of a special summit meeting in Sacramento in October.

Also, for the first time, California school districts now face the possibility of sanctions for failing to meet federal accountability goals. Before this year, such federal corrective actions applied only to individual schools.



Many in the education community have been critical of the federal method for identifying failing schools and districts under NCLB. Responding to the latest release of testing data, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said, "I'm not endeared to No Child Left Behind. I just don't believe their scale is the most accurate portrayal of school districts' improvement."

CTA President, Barbara Kerr, stated that the federal (AYP) and state (API) accountability systems "are confusing and contradictory, making most information useless to parents and teachers. She added that focus on scores "masks the fact that many schools lack basic resources."

AB 2066

This new state law establishes a federally required assessment and intervention process to assist school districts, county offices, and charter schools that have not made AYP for two years. Qualified LEA's must do the following:

- Conduct a District self-assessment involving all education stakeholders;
- Within 30 days, enter into a contract with a COE or other external entity;
- Revise and implement an improvement plan to improve student achievement;
- Or, hold a public meeting to discuss the reasons for non-participation by an LEA.

What Sanctions Can Be Applied?

Under NCLB, corrective actions are based upon the number of consecutive years a school fails to meet academic growth targets under the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standard.

Schools and school districts designated as Program Improvement (PI) are required to revise their academic programs and to provide professional development activities for the staff.

In Program Improvement schools that did not meet their 2003-04 growth targets, parents must be informed of their right to transfer their child,

at District expense, to a non-PI school within the District.

In addition, parents must be offered the opportunity to obtain "supplemental services" for their child at no cost.

If schools continue to fail to reach their academic growth targets in subsequent years, additional sanctions become possible.

Ultimately, for schools not meeting AYP growth targets for five consecutive years, districts must take corrective action and must choose at least one of the following:

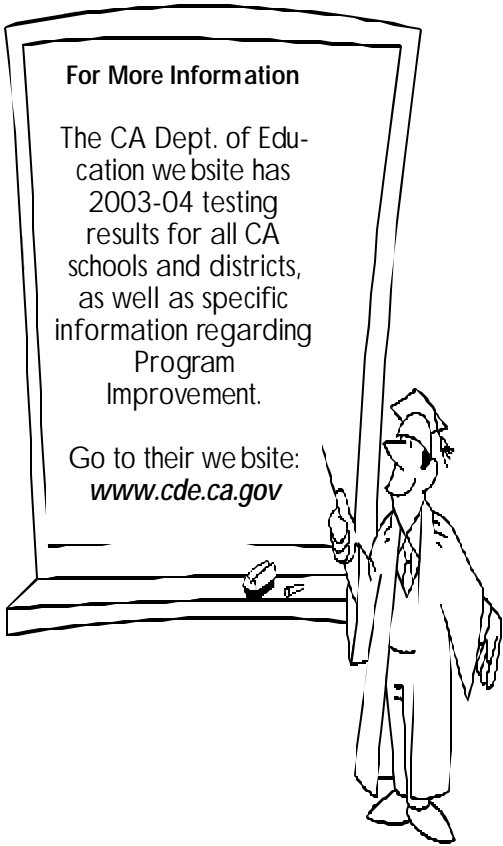
- Extend the school year or the school day;
- Restructure the internal organizational structure of the school;
- Significantly decrease management authority at the school level;
- Fully implement a new curriculum, including providing appropriate professional development for all relevant staff;
- Replace the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make progress.

California Teachers Association (www.cta.org)

For More Information

The CA Dept. of Education website has 2003-04 testing results for all CA schools and districts, as well as specific information regarding Program Improvement.

Go to their website:
www.cde.ca.gov



Federal & State: A Confusing Marriage?

The release of 2003-04 federal and state testing data offers some glaring contradictions because California's Academic Performance Index measures progress, while NCLB requires schools and specific subgroups of students, score at a particular level.

"Consider a ladder. The California system says a school is successful if most students manage to reach a new rung each year. By contrast, the federal system says a school is successful only if a predetermined percentage of students reaches the top rungs of the ladder each year." (from *S. F. Chronicle*, 9/1/04)

As a result, 317 California schools grew 30 or more points on API, but failed to make AYP goals and could be punished down the road. In the San Francisco Bay area, of the 606 schools that missed AYP, 74% improved on the state's API.

Speaking on behalf of CTA's 335,000 members, President Barbara Kerr said, "NCLB focuses on the wrong priorities for our schools by wasting billions of dollars on paperwork, bureaucracy and more standardized testing...California's teachers can see through (the federal) plan to set schools up for being called failures with the absurd rules of this massively underfunded law."

Many teachers believe it is simplistic and wrong to label a school based on a snapshot of two tests taken once a year. Rather, multiple indicators, including classroom performance, graduation rates and attendance should be used to assess student performance.

Sanctions in either the federal or state program result from the continued failure of a school or a district to meet annual API or AYP growth targets.

Associations Should Support Teachers in PI Schools

There are a number of activities in which Associations can engage to assist their teachers in Program Improvement schools and school districts.

- First, Association leaders should work with the District to ensure significant teacher involvement in the development of the LEA's improvement plan.
- Second, the Association should demand to bargain the impact of any LEA improvement plan. Refer negotiators to the *ESEA Bargaining Guide* (go to www.cta-search.org)
- Third, teacher leaders should insist on Association involvement and consultation with any visiting external entity.
- Fourth, the Association should be sure to review any report and recommendations for compliance with the local collective bargaining agreement or for relevance to local conditions.
- Fifth, the chapter should demand to bargain the development of professional growth activities and appropriate compensation for teachers who participate in such activities.
- Finally, local leaders should meet with the staff at the affected schools to share as much information as possible, hear their concerns and to answer questions.

