

August 25, 2008

Dear Parents:

The Washington Township Public School District is committed to providing all students with the educational foundation necessary to succeed in school and in life. While our district has always held high expectations for our students, the federal law entitled the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) established very specific requirements for school districts and individual schools for the purpose of ensuring a quality educational program for all students. More specifically, NCLB requires that adequate yearly progress (AYP) in Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics be measured annually for each school in New Jersey.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is calculated on the basis of the percentage of students who demonstrate "proficiency" on the annually administered *New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge Test* (NJASK Grades 3-8) or on the *New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment* (HSPA). In order to achieve AYP, schools must meet the State's academic proficiency benchmarks, as well as other indicators such as test participation rates and student attendance rates. These student-achievement benchmarks increase on an incremental basis every three years with the intended expectation that by June 2014, 100% of students will demonstrate proficiency as measured by these state tests. The 2007-2008 school year represented one of these benchmarking years in which the benchmark again increased, thereby making achievement of AYP a more challenging responsibility for students and schools.

Schools that do not make AYP for one year (Year 1) receive an Early Warning designation to alert them that students did not meet at least one of the AYP indicators. If a school does not make AYP for *two or more* consecutive years in the same content area (Language Arts Literacy or Mathematics), it is identified as a school "in need of improvement" and certain sanctions are applied to schools which receive Title I funding.

During the 2007-2008 school year, the New Jersey Department of Education developed a new, more rigorous NJASK test for Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics for grades 5-8, which was administered for the first time in the Spring 2008. The results of this new test and other information necessary for calculating AYP status for the 2008-2009 school year will not be available until later in the Fall. In the interim, schools are required to communicate their AYP status based upon the prior year's testing results from the Spring 2007.

As you may recall, Birches Elementary School achieved the AYP benchmarks in both Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics for the 2007-2008 school year. This AYP status will continue until such time that our AYP status for the 2008-2009 school year is updated based upon our students' performance on the new, more rigorous Spring 2008 test.

As we begin the 2008-2009 school year, the Birches Elementary staff and I look forward to the opportunities that the new school year will bring. We are firmly committed to achieving our goal of success for every student. For more information about our school's current AYP status and what we are doing to improve student performance, please see the attached "Question and Answer" section.

Sincerely,

Annette B. Miller  
Principal

# **AYP: Questions & Answers**

## **1. WHAT IS AYP?**

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* the United States Department of Education requires all districts and schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). To make AYP, each school must achieve 40 assessment targets plus an attendance rate target. The 40 assessment targets include 4 areas of test *performance* and *participation* (2 each in language arts and math), measured across 10 subgroups of students, and divided into categories such as race, economically disadvantaged, English language proficiency, and disability.

- To meet 2006-2007 performance targets in Language Arts Literacy, 75% of students had to achieve scores that were “proficient” or better in language arts literacy on our Spring 2007 statewide assessments.
- To meet the 2006-2007 mathematics performance targets, 62% of students had to score “proficient” or better in the math portion of the Spring 2007 statewide assessment.
- To meet the participation targets, 95% of students had to have taken each portion of the assessment.
- In addition, schools had to meet a 90% student attendance rate.

Each of the performance and participation standards must be met by all students, measured as a whole, and by each subgroup. If just one subgroup misses just one of the required targets, the entire school doesn't make AYP.

## **2. DID OUR SCHOOL MAKE AYP?**

We are happy to inform you that based on the state's Final 2006-2007 AYP Report, Birches Elementary School achieved all of the 41 required targets. Therefore, our school did make AYP. We look forward to receipt of our AYP results for the 2007-2008 school year, so as to determine our school's AYP status for the 2008-2009 school year.

## **3. WHAT IS OUR SCHOOL DOING TO CONTINUE TO PROMOTE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?**

The Birches Elementary School staff is committed to achieving the goals of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Currently, teachers and building administrators are developing and implementing a comprehensive plan that includes: The Birches staff is committed to achieving the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Currently teachers and building administrators are developing and implementing a comprehensive plan that includes:

- Identifying and addressing the specific needs of our low performing students.
- Expanding the knowledge base and skill set of teachers through in-district and out-of-district workshops and training opportunities.
- Integrating New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge /NJASK Prep strategies and activities into daily instruction.
- Revising assessments to align them with the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge /NJASK so as to familiarize students with the test's format.
- Incorporating supplemental materials to reinforce Core Content Standards.

#### **4. WHAT IS OUR DISTRICT DOING TO HELP OUR SCHOOL PROMOTE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?**

The district is helping our school by:

- Providing information on effective curriculum and instructional strategies.
- Analyzing student performance data to guide decisions.
- Increasing professional development for our teachers.
- Utilizing available grant funds to provide increased training, materials, and technology for our teaching staff.
- Maintaining memberships and formal affiliations with professional agencies and organizations to access current research, professional development opportunities, materials, and technology.
- Supporting advanced education for teachers and administrators.
- Phasing-in the implementation of a new standards-based mathematics curriculum in grades K-8.
- Offering parent-child workshops on literacy and math.
- Providing parent sessions on *Everyday Math* and *Connected Math*.

#### **5. HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN HELPING OUR SCHOOL PROMOTE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?**

As a parent or guardian, you can help our school promote students' achievement on state tests by:

- Attending school-sponsored parent meetings relating to student achievement.
- Supporting and reinforcing your child's good study habits.
- Reviewing your child's homework and test results.
- Setting goals with your child for continued academic improvement.
- Becoming an active participant in name of school Parent Advisory Committee, School Health and Safety Committee, and/or School Improvement Plan Committee
- Keeping open communication with Birches School's principal, teachers, and counselor when questions arise and/or to provide feedback and suggestions.