



Orchard Valley Middle School

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“Striving for Excellence”

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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 from last year, Orchard Valley Middle School’s AYP status was designated as a school in Needs Improvement: Year 2, which will continue until such time that our AYP status is updated based upon our students’ performance on the new, more rigorous Spring 2008 test.

As we begin the 2008-2009 school year, the Orchard Valley Middle School 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,

Stephan Buono
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, divided into categories such as race, economic disadvantage, English language proficiency, and disability.

- To meet 2006-07 performance targets in language arts, 66% of students must achieve scores that are “proficient” or better in language arts on our statewide assessments
- To meet the 2006-07 mathematics performance targets, 49% of students must score proficient or better in the math portion of the statewide assessment.
- To meet the participation targets, 95% of students must take each portion of the assessment.
- In addition, schools must also meet a 90% target 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 any one of the required targets, the entire school doesn't make AYP.

2. DID OUR SCHOOL MAKE AYP?

No - Based on the state's preliminary report Orchard Valley Middle School achieved 40 of the 41 required targets. However, because one subgroup missed one of the required targets, our school did not make AYP.

3. WHY DID OUR SCHOOL NOT MAKE AYP?

Although Orchard Valley Middle School met all but one of the AYP benchmarks, some of our special needs students with specific learning difficulties did not attain the language arts goal. However, we take pride in the fact that last school year we came very close to making AYP and that several subgroups showed significant increases from the previous school year.

4. WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT MAKING AYP?

Because Orchard Valley Middle School failed to achieve the AYP benchmark in Language Arts Literacy for two of the past three years, our school is considered to be “*in need of improvement.*” However, because our school does not receive federal Title I funding, we are exempt from any sanctions associated with *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Nonetheless, our school is required and strongly committed to take steps to improve student achievement and fulfill the academic standards set by the federal government and the State of New Jersey.

5. WHAT IS OUR SCHOOL DOING TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND MAKE AYP?

The Orchard Valley Middle 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:

- Identifying and addressing the specific needs of our low performing students
- Providing low performing students with a Test Prep class to prepare them for state assessments
- Utilizing assessment software programs to identify student needs and to provide reinforcement through individualized remediation
- Expanding the knowledge base and skill set of teachers through in-district and out-of-district workshops and training opportunities
- Integrating NJ ASK Prep strategies and activities into daily instruction
- Offering summer, after-school, and Saturday morning NJ ASK Academies
- Revising assessments to align them with the NJ ASK to familiarize students with the test's format
- Incorporating supplemental materials to reinforce Core Content Standards.

6. WHAT IS OUR DISTRICT DOING TO HELP OUR SCHOOL MAKE AYP?

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

7. HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN HELPING OUR SCHOOL IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

As a parent or guardian, you can help our school improve students' performance 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 the Orchard Valley Middle School Parent Advisory Committee, School Health and Safety Committee, and/or School Improvement Plan Committee
- Keeping open communication with Orchard Valley Middle School administrators and teachers when questions arise and /or to provide feedback and suggestions
- Utilizing parent access to Power Grade and teacher web pages to stay current with grades and assignments