

Report on AYP Results for the Special Education Cohort At Edgar Middle School and Metuchen High School

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that each state shall establish a timeline for adequate yearly progress toward 100% proficiency among all students including subgroups by the year 2014. Metuchen has consistently met the adequate yearly progress for this goal since the regulation's conception. In 2009, for the first time in Metuchen, we struggled to meet AYP in one of the 41 indicators. This indicator is the special education subgroup.

The discussion of Metuchen Schools' AYP standing pertains to thirteen 11th grade students at Metuchen High School and fifty-eight 6-8 grade classified students at Edgar Middle School. These students make up the subgroup for which we did not make AYP. While a school district can be designated as not meeting AYP for one subgroup, it can have an outstanding performance overall. For example, the high school's 93.2 percent proficient rating in Language Arts is at the top of I-districts in the State whose average was just over 94 percent. Many schools perform very well overall but fall short of meeting AYP because of a small subgroup. Not one I-district in Middlesex County met AYP at Middle School or High School levels for this reason. NJDOE has stated that it wants to be among the most ambitious states in the U.S. This is reflected in the number of excellent school districts that are listed as not meeting AYP due to the elevating of standards in a subgroup that has many variables. The initial intent of NCLB was to assure that every student in America would be proficient by the year 2014. That includes the subgroups and each year more and more schools are unable to meet AYP. It is worth noting that the most widely offered and largely attended workshops throughout the state this school year are workshops designed to address subgroups and the struggle to keep up with the raising bar of AYP. While this is a good indicator of commitment to serving a population that needs ongoing support, it may also be an indicator that there needs to be a different way to indicate growth in this area.

Also in discussion of AYP, there needs to be a clarification of the word "fail" which is how an online news organization and some newspapers have characterized it. The word "fail" is not used by NJDOE. Not meeting AYP means the specific cohort did not progress at a rate that met the State's definition of adequate. The official report we get from the state says "yes" or "no" in a column that indicates whether or not the group is progressing adequately toward 100% proficiency. It does not say "fail" not just because the word may be considered unpleasant but because it is not an accurate reflection of the intent of the designation.

While the challenge for meeting AYP for this one subgroup is great, we recognize we must continue to modify our programs to improve so that we move toward meeting AYP. The following is a list of supplemental support we are providing for this subgroup.

Action Plan for Edgar Middle School to Meet AYP in 2010-2011

Edgar School - Math

In recent years, we have bolstered efforts to achieve proficiency among the special education students but the rising standards for special education proficiency have outpaced our modifications. For the last two years we have included test prep sessions after school and weekends but for the 2010 testing season we are embedding the remediation more in the school day since special education attendance in these sessions was low compared to the attendance of regular education students who were not proficient. The district recently purchased three SmartBoards to be used with math instruction since we have noticed a significant rise in engagement among high challenge students when well-trained staff use this tool in the classroom. For the longer term, we also plan to develop curriculum for special education mathematics that goes beyond modifying regular education curriculum.

Short-term modifications:

Continued

- After-school and Saturday morning test prep for NJASK math (grade 8)
- Daily math lab for 7th and 8th graders

New

- 5th and 7th grade Math lab
- Smaller class sizes for small group instruction (skills)
- Daily “do now” warm up covering a specific cluster from the NJASK Math assessment
- SmartBoards
- More supplemental Math instruction during school day

Long-term modifications (pending curriculum committee review and BOE approval where necessary):

- Revise special education curriculum
- Put in place more instructional support for special education math students
- Increase instructional time exploring double periods in math that could include math applications in Science class
- In-Class Support for Math – (remove ICS in Science and Social Studies and place it in Math)
- Use NCLB and Special Education funds to conduct a summer school for promoting proficiency among the students in transition from one school to the other.

Caveat: With all of this support in place, it will continue to remain a high challenge to bring all students in the special education subgroup to proficiency. If a student is cognitively impaired, by definition it would be highly unlikely for him or her to be proficient on standardized tests that have an increasing level of difficulty.

Action Plan for Metuchen High School to Meet AYP in 2010-2011

The Impact of the NJDOE's New Calculation Formula

In 2009 the NJDOE Accountability Office revised how they calculated AYP and this had a negative impact on Metuchen High School's AYP designation. Starting in 2009, the calculation carried over students who were partially proficient to the following test administrations through 12th grade. (The Accountability Office calls it "banking.") As a result, for the first time since AYP began, the high school had enough students in the subgroup to be counted towards AYP. The cutoff is 30 and while we have not had an 11th grade class with more than 29 classified students for years, the new calculation system carried over students and we wound up with a count of 31. The small population in this subgroup means a slight variation in either direction has a drastic impact on the percentage. The Accountability Office changed the calculation system after the test administration so we were unable to adjust the manner in which we assigned students for either SRA (graduation alternative assessment to HSPA) or rigorous HSPA prep.

Aside from an ongoing review of how we manage the new Accountability calculation, we are prepared to implement the following action plan to meet AYP at MHS in the future.

– English/Language Arts

Short Term Modifications:

Continue to:

- Include Special Education teachers in all English Department meetings and articulation sessions.
- Provide pull-out remediation for students who did not meet proficiency on the NJASK8 Language Arts section, in preparation for the HSPA.
- Utilize HSPA-like formative assessments to inform teachers about student strengths and weaknesses and form instructional goals.

New Modifications:

- Provide the Special Education teachers with professional development opportunities to assist with HSPA preparation instruction.
- Shift focus of instruction in classes to include 1-2 days/week of HSPA preparation.
- Use new resource, Voice Lessons, to assist teachers in analysis of quotations in preparation for writing an essay response to a quotation.
- Provide teachers with instruction on the Extended Understanding strategies that will be field tested on the 2010 HSPA, and incorporate it in instruction throughout the 2010-2011 school year.

Long Term Modifications:

- Create (or revise) special education curriculum with HSPA preparation embedded.
- English supervisor to monitor lesson plans of special education classes.
- English supervisor to complete at least one observation of each special education resource English teacher.