

Dear Parent,

Duncan Independent School District is committed to setting and reaching high goals so that every student can succeed. Recently, reports were released showing how our school district is doing in meeting state and federal requirements. These standards are complicated. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you how the standards affect Duncan Public Schools. This letter will tell you:

- Why/How Oklahoma uses the Academic Performance Index (API) for school accountability: pieces of the API are used to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which is a federal requirement mandated by *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB);
- The challenges of API;
- How our school district is doing in meeting those requirements; and,
- What steps we are taking to help all our students achieve.

1. STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

As you may know, all schools must now meet rigorous state and federal accountability requirements:

State: School and district performance is reported on a numeric scale of 1-1500. The score referred to as the Academic Performance Index (API) is based on seven indicators divided into three components as follows:

- Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP): Utilizes reading/language arts and math results from all state mandated tests
- School Completion: Includes attendance, dropout and graduation rates
- Academic Excellence: ACT scores and percent of students participating, Advanced Placement (AP) credit and college remediation rates in reading and math

Federal: The federal requirements called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), under NCLB, focus on four indicators of education success including:

- Math achievement
- Reading/Language Arts achievement
- Student participation in testing
- Student attendance rates or graduation rates, as applicable to grade level

For each indicator, a specific statewide performance target has been established. According to NCLB regulations, AYP is an “all-or-nothing” determination; in other words, schools and districts must meet all targets for all measurable student groups in order to meet AYP. Regarding testing, eleven specific student groups are required to meet the statewide performance targets. These groups include: All Students, Regular Students, Major Racial/Ethnic Groups (Black, American Indian, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, White, Other), Economically Disadvantaged Students, English Language Learners (ELL) and Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP).

2. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF AYP

Every group counts separately under AYP. To make AYP, schools must make sure that every single group of students – including students who have learning disabilities or who do not speak fluent English – meets the same AYP goals. If even one group does not meet the goals, our school district cannot make AYP.

AYP gives all or nothing results. Under NCLB, a school district either makes AYP or it does not. There is no in-between. It is as if the only two grades are “pass” and “fail.” A school district can be very close to meeting its goals, but it will get the label of not making AYP, just the same as if the school district did not get close to meeting the goals at all. Schools or districts may have a very high overall API score, but still need to make improvements in specific student groups (e.g. race, IEP, ELL or economically disadvantaged students).

3. HOW OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT DID THIS YEAR

Our school district’s API score is 1179 (Regular Education Students) out of a possible 1500. All five elementary sites and Duncan Middle School achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). One subgroup, Economically Disadvantaged, at Duncan High School did not achieve AYP in Reading. When combined for district-wide results, English Language Learners did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Reading and Math. Students on Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) did not meet standards in Math. These conditions resulted in Duncan High School and the district being reported as not making AYP. Schools/districts will be designated as School Improvement Schools/Districts after not meeting standards for two consecutive years. This is the first year that any site or disaggregated group has not made AYP.

4. HOW WE ARE HELPING OUR STUDENTS ACHIEVE

We are continuing our efforts to help all our students achieve at high levels. Examples of initiatives to enhance student learning include:

- Professional Development – we are currently training all teachers, including those who teach IEP and ELL students, in specific instructional strategies that will be incorporated in teaching reading and math;
- Providing additional instructional time within the school day for reading instruction;
- Providing computer assisted reading and math instruction;
- Continuing to develop strong professional learning communities within our schools and district to encourage the sharing of educational practice in meeting the learning needs of each and every student;
- After-school programming at four sites;
- A Language Arts Curriculum Director has been employed to work closely with teachers to align curriculum and develop curriculum maps to guide instruction toward meeting Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Standards (PASS);
- Providing a summer school remediation program for first through eighth grade students; and
- Reading development and improvement programming at Duncan High School.

Duncan Public Schools is a high quality school district committed to student learning. Your continued support as we work together to realize our mission is highly valued.

Sincerely,

Sherry Labyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent