



# FAQ

## Accountability

### What is accountability?

A simple definition of accountability is an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.

In education, accountability means reviewing how well teachers, principals, and superintendents help students grow.

### How does accountability work in Wyoming?

Wyoming has two accountability systems: state and federal. The federal system measures accountability using Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations. AYP is an annual measurement of school quality required under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that allows the United States Department of Education to determine how schools are performing academically in each state.

Wyoming accountability is defined in the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA). This law is different from NCLB in many respects and takes into account measures specifically related to educational goals in Wyoming.

### Why are there two accountability systems and what do they do?

Short answer: both are required by law.

AYP calculations are required under NCLB. WAEA was created by the Wyoming legislature as a Wyoming-specific accountability system.

### Defining the Terminology

#### No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

NCLB is the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the principle federal law affecting K-12 education.

#### Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

AYP is the school performance measurement for the federal accountability system NCLB.

#### Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA)

WAEA is the Wyoming state education accountability system enacted by legislature in 2013, and established by the state board through the WDE.

#### School Performance Report (SPR)

SPRs are the performance level determinations based on a school's performance, according to WAEA indicators.

# FAQ Accountability (cont'd)

## **What's the difference between the NCLB system and the WAEA system?**

While the general goals of both systems are the same, the main difference between the two systems is that they use different measures to evaluate overall school performance. Under NCLB, schools are measured each year by AYP calculations, while WAEA uses a different set of measures reported in the annual School Performance Report (SPR). The two systems may produce different results; for example, a school that is rated as “in need of improvement” according to the NCLB could be “meeting expectations” under WAEA or vice versa.

## **How are schools rated?**

School performance levels are determined from a variety of data and are calculated to help determine which schools are doing well and which schools are in need of assistance.

WAEA looks at student growth, readiness, achievement, equity, and participation. Based on these indicators schools are rated using varying levels of performance that can be achieved: Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations, Partially Meeting Expectations, or Not Meeting Expectations.

The federal system, NCLB, on the other hand, looks at different indicators including participation, proficiency rates, and graduation. Schools are rated by a pass/fail type system, where schools are rated as “in need of improvement” when they fail to meet the year’s requirements.

## **How do the ratings affect my child's school?**

Under WAEA, schools that are rated as exceeding expectations must provide a communication plan of their best practices. Those rated as meeting, partially meeting, or not meeting expectations must submit a school improvement plan which addresses areas where the school is underperforming.

Under NCLB, schools identified as “in need of improvement” must reserve a portion of their federal funds for professional development, and, when possible, offer parents a choice of a different school. Schools that have missed AYP for three consecutive years must also offer tutoring services.

**The school ratings are just one indicator of school quality.** The best way to understand how your school is doing is to get involved. Take the opportunity to visit with teachers, parents, and the principals at your local school.

## **Should I be concerned if my child's school is low performing?**

If a school is labeled as “in need of improvement” under NCLB or “not meeting expectations” under WAEA, it does not mean that school is completely failing to educate its students. It may mean that it has a few weaknesses that need to be addressed and accommodated. The WDE is leading an effort to ensure that all Wyoming students receive the quality education they deserve, and identifying weaknesses within the school is just one step in that process.