

The ABCs of AYP

The citizens of Rowan County truly care about education. This is evident in the numerous editorials and Letters to the Editor in the Salisbury Post. We, as parents and members of our community, realize we need to do something, but what?

Let's start with a better understanding of the basics and then move forward. If you are like most people, the use of acronyms and jargon for any organization is a bit much at times, even in education. Here is an attempt to break it down and get a handle on what we really need to know.

ABCs – not just an abbreviation of the alphabet but a NC accountability improvement program that began in 1996-1997. It has three primary goals:

A - accountability for results

B - teaching the basics

C - local control

This program was one of the first in the nation to focus attention on the academic growth of students from year-to-year.

At the 10-year mark of the ABC program, new growth formulas are being used to better measure student growth each year. Individual schools are expected to meet growth targets and are recognized at various levels.

NCLB – No Child Left Behind. The major goal of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is for all public school children to perform at grade level in reading and mathematics by the end of the 2013-14 school year. NCLB's accountability requirements, designed to tell whether schools, districts, and states are on track to meet that goal, have been incorporated into North Carolina's accountability system, the ABCs of Public Education. All public schools, in North Carolina and throughout the country, must measure and report Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as outlined in NCLB.

AYP – The major goal for the federal No Child Left Behind law is for 100% of all public school children to perform at grade level in reading and math by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. The law's accountability requirements are based around **Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP**, which measures the yearly progress of different groups of students at the school, district, and state levels against yearly targets in reading and math.

Student groups are:

- Schools as a whole
- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Asian
- Multiracial
- Economically Disadvantaged Students
- Limited English Proficient Students
- Students with Disabilities

All student groups are measured alike. If just one of the student groups falls below the standard on one testing category, the entire school will be labeled as "Needs Improvement," and the school might not make AYP for that year.

Title I – This is the largest federal education program with the purpose to help ensure all children have the opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state academic standards and assessments.

Many of the major requirements in No Child Left Behind are outlined in Title I - Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), teacher and paraprofessional requirements, accountability, sanctions for schools designated for improvement, standards and assessments, annual state report cards, professional development, and parent involvement.

Title I provides federal funding for schools to help students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Our school system has 18 Title I schools.

Standards are only meaningful if they are used to measure learning, to set clear goals, to identify schools that need to improve, and to focus additional energy and resources on the schools and students that have the farthest to go. A school that does not make Adequate Yearly Progress is not a failure. Saying that a school is "in need of improvement" is far different from saying that it is failing.

A school's AYP and ABCs results may differ because they use different sets of criteria. AYP looks at specific student groups meeting set goals; the ABCs model follows the same students over time and looks at growth and performance. In the ABCs, one grade or subject can be offset when looking at whole school growth and performance. AYP is an "all or nothing" model according to subjects and student groups. Both the ABCs and AYP information should be used to focus school improvement efforts.

So what this all boils down to is that the Rowan Salisbury School System (RSSS) has various avenues of reporting how well our students are performing and they are all tied into the NCLB federal law.

Here are Superintendent Dr. Judy Grissom's expectations for all RSSS staff to move our school district forward:

Teachers:

- Teach the NC Standard Course of Study
- Utilize pacing guides and formative assessments
- Analyze data to determine student needs
- Communicate with parents

Principals:

- Increase and communicate expectations for teachers and students
- Regularly monitor instruction to ensure that the NC Standard Course of study is being taught in all classrooms
- Help staff members understand the serious nature of being in corrective action
- Stress the importance of participation in all collaborative meetings; communicate and work with central office directors, Superintendency Team, and literacy coaches
- Analyze and provide data to teachers

Central Office:

- Provide support to principals and teachers in all areas of academics
- Analyze data to determine areas of need
- Stay up-to-date on proven instructional practices and share these with principals and teachers

What can we, as parents and concerned citizens do?

- Attend school-based meetings: PTA, School Board meetings, etc.
- Vote in School Board elections
- Become an advocate for better education in our community
- If you are a parent, provide encouragement to your child to properly complete all required coursework. Keep the communication lines open between you and your child's teacher.
- Volunteer your time. Help read to a child, assist with a special project, volunteer with organizations like Rowan Partners for Education and Communities in Schools...pick something and get involved!

Rowan Partners for Education (RPE) is a citizen-led education advocacy organization, whose purpose is to gather factual information to improve public education in Rowan County. We are advocates for the school system – not individual schools. RPE originated through the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce Focused Forward Campaign. It is because of community involvement that we can promote quality education in our community.