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EDU 723 Current Issues and Educational Leadership
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The No Child Left Behind Act: Are Starts on Target to Make their Goals?
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Fall 2007

The purpose of this article is to examine if states are making progress towards the act's ultimate goal of all students scoring at or above proficiency level in reading and math by 2014. It explains how states establish goals and the consequences of not making AYP. For the purpose of this study, the department of education websites were the source of the data. Since each state creates its own proficiency level, meta-analysis was utilized to compare states. The reports included all k-12 in the years 2004, 05 and 06 for math and reading. States that did not meet these criteria were left out of the study such as Iowa that published the results every 2 years.

Grades 3-5 scored on average 73.5% proficient or above in reading and 70.5% in math. 6-8 scored 70.3% at or above in reading and 60.8% in math. High school scored 71.8% in reading and 64.1% in math. Students in all grade groups scored higher in reading than math. The lowest grades are produced by middle schools. When scores were analyzed from one year to the next, scores went up. Middle school reading tests made the highest increase, followed by high school math and reading. The lowest was middle school math. Tennessee had the highest number of proficient students in reading and Nebraska in math, which means they are closer to attaining the 2014 goal. Conversely, California and Hawaii had the lowest in reading. As far as Maryland is concerned, 77% of students scored at or above in reading and 74% in math from 3-5 grades in 2006. Gains are all negative.

In 2005-06, 71% of states made some progress in reading whereas 68% improved in math. Wyoming had the greatest improvement in reading (16%) and math (32%). While most states saw some decrease, Hawaii had the greatest decrease in reading and North Carolina in math. In the middle school, 67% of Marylander students scored at or above

proficiency level with less than 2% gains in reading and negative progress in math. In 2005, 60% of Maryland high schoolers scored at or above proficient in reading and 66% in math. We made a lot of gains in math and insignificant gains in reading.

Maryland made AYP in 2005 for grades 3-5 and 6-9. In 2006, we did not make AYP at all. Out of 35 states, only 7% in 2005 made AYP while 6% did in 2006 in math and reading.

According to this and previous research, proficiency levels do not increase linearly. If this continues to be the case, policymakers must take another route to evaluate teachers and students. I believe that 100% of proficiency is a utopia. It sounds good on paper but the reality is totally different. How can we meet our goal if funding has been curtailed? In 2004 Peyser and Costrell stated that most states had adequate funding to carry out the plan. This was four years ago before the economy started to slow down. It seems that the federal educational policies are setting up states and schools for failure. Education is not like a machine or a computer. There are so many issues that must be addressed before positive results show such as learning objectives that will really help students succeed in the 21st century. The government must make sure all students are receiving health care, a nutritious diet, and psychological support before making AYP. Academic high performance will simply be a reflection that all the basic needs have been taken care of.