

Appendix C

Discussion of NCLB “Starting Point”

Section 1111(b)(2)(B) of NCLB requires each state to create an accountability program to ensure that all schools are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). Each state has the flexibility to define how it will approach this task and hold schools responsible for the progress of the students.

The law sets forth various requirements that will not be quoted herein. Instead, the discussion that follows will provide Florida’s solutions and will include a discussion of all relevant points.

Florida’s student assessment tests measure the same high standards for all students, are valid and reliable instruments, seek continuous improvement of students’ educational attainments, measure all schools against the established standards, and report disaggregated test results for all groups required by NCLB. The discussion that follows will address (1) the starting point for measuring progress, (2) the timelines for improvement, (3) other indicators that will be used, (4) annual measurable objectives, and intermediate goals for improvement.

Since the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test has been in place for several years, the Department of Education has complete information on the current status of student achievement in reading and mathematics in grades 3-10 and writing achievement in grades 4, 8, and 10. Information on student achievement in science will not be available until after the spring 2003 assessment has been conducted.

Because Florida has not established different levels of performance for the writing assessment as is required by NCLB, this test will not be used to meet the requirements of Section 1111(b)(3)(C)(v)(I) or (II). The writing assessment results will be used as an additional indicator as required by Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(vii). See the discussion in the following pages about “other indicators.”

The Department analyzed the results of the FCAT administered in the spring 2002 and the results are presented in the following discussion. In considering what should be the starting point for AYP, the FCAT data could be presented in several ways: (1) as mean scale scores on the FCAT 100-500 scale, (2) as mean scale scores on the FCAT 0-3000 vertical scale, or (3) as percents of students in the “Proficient and Above” category. Since the latter is considered to be the easiest to understand and is consistent with the overall objective of getting students to be Proficient or better, the “starting point” data were analyzed and are presented as percentages. This does not preclude the Department from using

the student performance in terms of the vertical scale for the purpose of tracking progress over time.

Section 1111(b)(2)(E) provides that the starting point shall be, at a minimum, based on the higher of the percentage of students at the proficient level who are in –

“(i) the State’s lowest achieving group of students described in subparagraph (C)(v)(II); or

(ii) the school at the 20th percentile in the State, based on enrollment, among all schools ranked by the percentage of students at the proficient level.”

Florida’s data were analyzed both ways, separately by grade level and subject area (reading and mathematics). The FCAT nationally-normed test (the SAT-9) was not used in this analysis since it is not part of the State’s school accountability program. Instead, only the portion of FCAT that is constructed around the Sunshine State Standards was used. (This is commonly identified as the FCAT-SSS.)

Table 7 presents the results of the analysis method specified in (ii) for reading and mathematics. The percent of students scoring Level 3 and above was calculated for each school, and the schools were ranked. Counting upward from the lowest scoring school, a school containing the 20%-tile of student enrollment was located. This analysis depends on counting the student population within each school without regard to how many grade levels are present in each school. Thus, the population being counted is not the population of students in the tested grade level who earned ratings of “Proficient or Above” but is, instead, the total enrollment of the school itself.

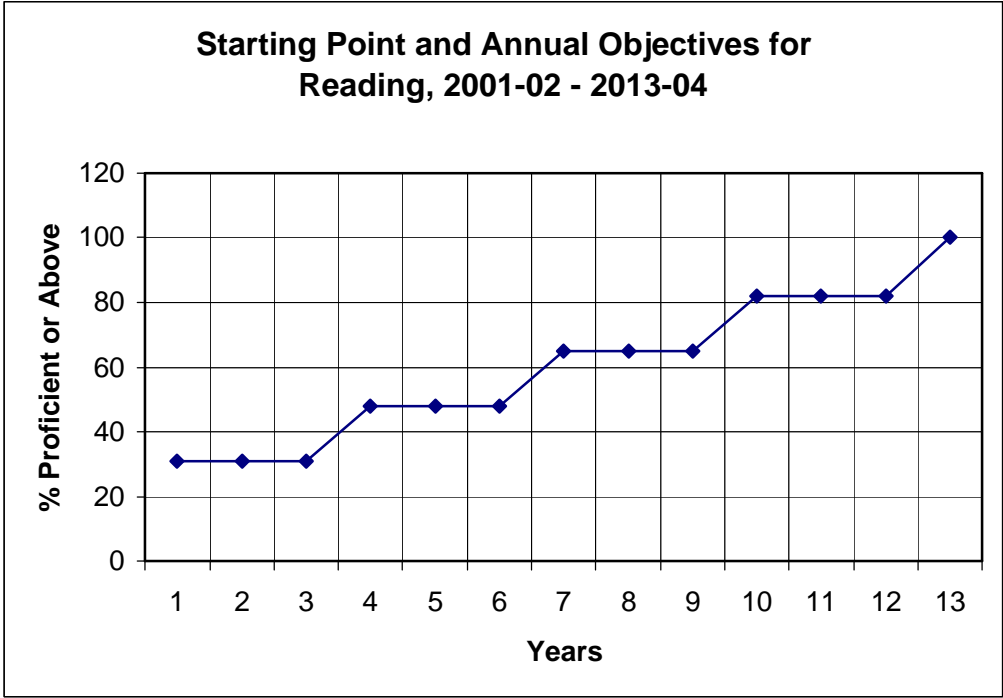
Table 7
Identification of Starting Points Based on Achievement
and School Enrollment

Reading	Mathematics
30.68%	37.54%

NCLB specifies that the starting points will be the HIGHER of the results of the two analyses. Since these starting points are higher than those derived from the first analysis, the starting points will be those shown in Table 7: 31% for reading and 38% for mathematics.

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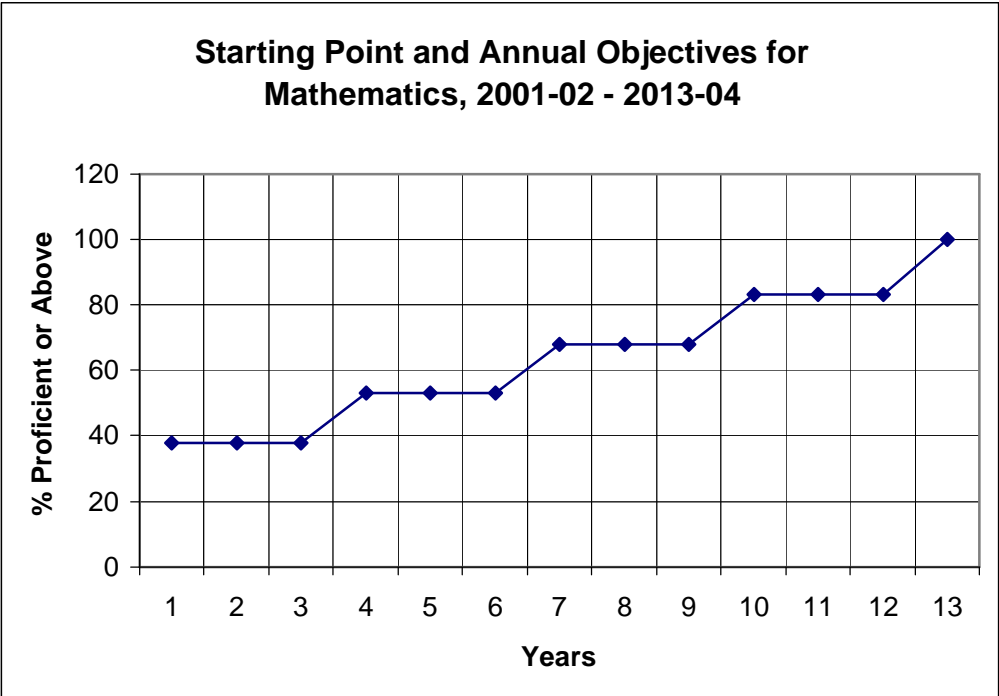
Appendix D
Annual Progress Objectives



NOTE: Year 1 = 2001-02 base year.

Source Data:

Year	Reading % Prof.
2001-02	31
2002-03	31
2003-04	31
2004-05	48
2005-06	48
2006-07	48
2007-08	65
2008-09	65
2009-10	65
2010-11	82
2011-12	82
2012-13	82
2013-14	100



NOTE: Year 1 = 2001-02 base year.

Source Data:

Year	Math % Prof.
2001-02	38
2002-03	38
2003-04	38
2004-05	53
2005-06	53
2006-07	53
2007-08	68
2008-09	68
2009-10	68
2010-11	83
2011-12	83
2012-13	83
2013-14	100

Appendix E

Florida's AYP Plan

As an introduction to Florida's AYP proposal, first consider how the NCLB requirements for accountability are structured. As Congress and the President planned for NCLB, they faced a dilemma in that the 50 states and territories have different academic standards and student assessment programs which are not equivalent, interchangeable, measure the same content, administered at the same grade levels, given to students at the same time of year, generate the same kind of information, or have the same impact. Indeed, some states prefer not to emphasize centralized testing programs and assign that responsibility to each district. This is a direct result of the provisions in the Constitution that give states the responsibility of implementing a public education system.

Congress sought an effective way to measure the success of the Title I provisions in NCLB given the realities of such a diverse national system. A good evaluation system would try to accumulate information across all of the states, districts, and schools to provide the means of making sensible comparisons among the various delivery agents. For years, however, Congress has had little success in gathering such common information.

To illustrate the approaches used by Congress in its attempts to gather meaningful common data, consider the "anchor test study" and the "NCE" units approach. In the former, an attempt was made to link together several different commercially available norm-referenced tests in reading. The attempt proved to be extremely difficult and was abandoned by the mid-1970's. The latter approach tried to create a type of single scale that could be used in place of a single test administered in all schools. The Normal Curve Equivalent scores were useful but did not solve the problems associated with different instructional programs, different curriculum expectations, and differences in content being assessed.

As Congress created the language for NCLB, it was faced with the task of requiring improvement in student achievement while not imposing a national testing program or a national student identification number to track progress over time. The model that evolved, therefore, is basically the same approach as has been used in the past—a "status" model rather than a "growth" model. Student achievement within a school, district, or state is to be measured during the current academic year and the results compared to the achievement in the following year. In other words, fifth grade students in 2002-03 will be compared to fifth grade students in 2003-04 even though the students are not the same! The assumption is that one year's group of students is not significantly different than the next year's group of students, an idea that is extremely tenuous in these days of high family mobility. It is further exacerbated in a state like Florida where

there is tremendous in-migration of students every year, making each year's class different in many ways than the one last year.

Now consider what NCLB requires each state to do in measuring AYP. The following five concepts summarize the important steps.

1. Starting points are determined based on 2001-02 reading/language arts and mathematics achievement data. With the goal of 100% "Proficient or Above" in 12 years, each state stipulates annual measurable objectives (growth targets). One or more "other indicators" are selected for measurement.
2. Each state gathers assessment information (including other indicators) and reports the % "Proficient and Above" for: all students, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and five categories of race/ethnicity (white, African-American, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan). This is a status measurement at a point in time in which current performance is compared to the growth targets.
3. Each school's performance is compared to the state measurable objectives. Each subgroup in #2 above must meet or exceed the objectives. However, if one or more subgroups do not meet the objectives, the school will meet AYP if the performance of the low performing subgroups increases by 10% compared to the previous year and if those subgroups made progress on one or more of the other indicators and if not less than 95% of each subgroup of students participated in the assessment. While the first comparison is one of status, the second could be either a status measurement comparison or a growth comparison for a cohort of students because the law does not prescribe which it will be.
4. Each district's performance is compared to the state measurable objectives. Each subgroup in #2 above must meet or exceed the objectives.

However, if one or more subgroups does not meet the objectives, the district will meet AYP if the performance of the low performing subgroups increases by 10% compared to the previous year and if those subgroups made progress on one or more of the other indicators and if not less than 95% of each subgroup of students participated in the assessment. While the first comparison is one of status, the second can be either a status measurement comparison or a growth comparison for a cohort of students.

5. Compare the state's performance to the measurable objectives. Each subgroup in #2 above must meet or exceed the objectives.

In addition, the state must meet its objectives relating to the development and attainment of English proficiency for LEP students.

Assuming that these steps have been completed, the results of the assessments will be displayed for the public and the educational community. The conditions for meeting AYP under NCLB are challenging in that the school and district must meet the state targets in each of several separate comparisons. This can be illustrated by the following table.

The data display would appear as shown below for elementary, middle, and senior high schools.

Elementary and Middle Schools

	Reading	Reading Participation Rate	Math	Math Participation Rate	Other (Writing)*
All students					
Econ. Disadvantaged					
White					
Black					
Hispanic					
Asian					
Am. Indian					
SWD					
LEP					

* In accordance with Section 200.19 of the final regulations, the "Other Academic Indicators" will be disaggregated by subgroup for reporting purposes but will not be used for determining AYP.

Senior High Schools

	Reading	Reading Participation Rate	Math	Math Participation Rate	Other (Graduation Rate)*	Other (Writing)*
All students						
Econ. Disadvantaged						
White						
Black						
Hispanic						
Asian						
Am. Indian						
SWD						
LEP						

* In accordance with Section 200.19 of the final regulations, the “Other Academic Indicators” will be disaggregated by subgroup for reporting purposes but will not be used for determining AYP.

For a senior high school to meet all of its targets requires a number of separate Yes/No conjunctive decisions. Scoring relatively higher in reading will not compensate for low scores in mathematics as would happen in a compensatory model.

The reporting of assessment information in the previous tables is subject to the following conditions:

1. The cells in the above table will be reported subject to the limitations on cell sizes previously described.
2. The school’s values in each cell of the above table will be the average of the current year’s performance and the previous year’s performance, with the exception of the percent tested and school grade which always shall be the current year’s values. The averages will be unweighted.
3. Students who take an alternate assessment will have their results reported in categorical classifications that include the designation of “Proficient,” thereby making it possible for their performance to be counted with those of other students.
4. Any school that is in its first year of operation will be included in the system but with only one year of data to report. Schools that include K-2

- and do not take the statewide assessment (FCAT) will be assigned the proficiency ratings earned by the school their students attend in grade 3.
5. In the event that a school district selects additional indicators with which to determine a school's AYP, as is authorized in Section 1116 of HR-1 (NCLB authorization), the district shall provide these data to the Department of Education for use with the State Report Cards required by law.
 6. The required NCLB data analyses and reports will be prepared for each school regardless of the grade level configurations. That is, a K-5 school will generate data displayed as shown on the previous page as well as a grades 9-12 high school or a K-12 school. Each can be reported in terms of the percent of students who are "Proficient or Above" in reading and in mathematics. At the district level, the data will be reported for all students in the district who are "Proficient or Above" in reading and mathematics without regard for school-by-school distinctions.

NCLB includes several important concepts such as the following.

- (1) All students must be held to the same, challenging standards;
- (2) All students are to be assessed;
- (3) The progress of students is to be consistent and forward-looking with the goal of moving all students to at least the Proficient level within 12 years;
- (4) Assessment results are to be aggregated and reported to parents annually;
- (5) Assessment and accountability results are to be disaggregated by seven major subgroups and
- (6) Student progress is monitored annually and improvement is noted when performance improves with a specific grade level(s) over time. This is a "status system" on a very large scale.

While these principles are admirable, the NCLB model can be improved in those states that have launched an effort to implement "value-added achievement monitoring" in which the progress of individual students is monitored across time. If Johnny's reading achievement is measured in fourth grade and he is measured again in fifth grade with a test that has been vertically linked across the grade levels, his absolute growth, or lack thereof, can be measured and reported. The keys to such a system are: (1) a student testing program in all grade levels, (2) test content keyed to an established set of curriculum expectations, (3) a vertical measurement scale that allows student scores to be reported from the least grade to the highest, and (4) a student identification system that assigns a unique number to a student through his/her lifetime within the public school system. All of these elements are found in the existing Florida public school assessment and accountability system.

The existing Florida school accountability program produces school grades based on student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics. Special attention is paid to students who are in the lowest 25% of students in FCAT Levels 1, 2, and 3 in each school. Further, the program features the measurement of academic growth of individual students through the FCAT vertical score scale in reading and mathematics.

Florida proposes to fully implement NCLB in all schools and deliver analyses and results exactly as the law specifies. However, in order to link the NCLB status system to Florida's existing status and gain system, it is proposed that no school will be allowed to be designated as meeting AYP if it has been graded "D" or "F" under the A+ school grading system.

Under the terms of the system Florida is proposing, all of these objectives will be met with a system that is more challenging than the NCLB requirements. Congress enacted a law that meets the constraints posed by the vast majority of states who do not have the student assessment and accountability traditions found in Florida. If Florida changes its A+ system to serve as the NCLB accountability system, it actually will cause our system to regress, not move forward with its measurement of individual student learning gains.

Florida already has a tremendous investment in its A+ Plan for Education, and educators and citizens are familiar with it. To make changes would require amendments to existing statutes, administrative rules, computer programs, administrative infrastructure, and information dissemination to all public schools.

The Florida school grading system is illustrated in Appendix F of this Plan. Close inspection demonstrates how the program holds schools accountable for scoring high on the FCAT, specifically, having increasing numbers of students earning FCAT Achievement Level scores previously identified as being the equivalent of "Proficient or Above" as required by NCLB.

The program requires students to make learning gains in reading and mathematics if they presently are earning less than "Proficient." If they already are achieving at the "Proficient or Above" levels, the school earns points to the degree that the students do not regress.

Specific attention is paid to the achievement of those students who are demonstrating the least achievement, below "Proficient." Schools earn points for all students in the lowest 25%-tile who make "adequate progress," defined as gaining in achievement as much as the norm group for the State.

The existing system already incorporates the results of the writing assessment that we have proposed be the "other indicator" for grades 4, 8, and 10.

If a school does not meet its annual growth targets, it can meet AYP under the “safe harbor” provisions of NCLB for improving the performance of students in various subgroups:

1. The percentage of students in that group below the State’s proficiency achievement level “decreased by [at least] 10 percent of that percentage from the preceding school year”; and
2. That group made progress on the other indicator of writing or, for high schools, the graduation rate; and
3. Not less than 95% of the students enrolled in each group takes the statewide assessment.

However, if a school does not meet the State’s annual objective growth target for two years in a row or if the school otherwise earns a grade of “D” or “F,” it will be designated a school in need of targeted assistance and additional services or sanctions will be identified.

If a school does not meet the 10% growth “safe harbor” as described above, the progress of its non-Proficient students will be examined. If the school demonstrates that more than half of the non-Proficient students have grown more than their individual growth expectation from last year to the current year, AYP will have been met. The State will establish the growth expectations on the basis that non-Proficient students should be Proficient or Above within a specified period of time.

Schools and districts will be evaluated separately for reading and mathematics performance. A school or district could fail to meet its AYP requirements in reading one year, improve in reading the second year, and become deficient in mathematics the second year. If this occurs, the school or district will not be subjected to the requirements of Sections 200.32-200.34 of the NCLB rules because it has not had two consecutive years of poor performance in the same content area. If a school or district fails to meet its AYP requirements in the same content area (e.g., reading) for two consecutive years, it will be subjected to the requirements of Sections 200.3-200.34.

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