

South Sioux City Schools has high standards for students: Federal labels unrealistic, ineffective

South Sioux City Community Schools continues to set high standards and take action to ensure every child learns, progresses and succeeds in school. The Friday, October 16th release of what are called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals required by No Child Left Behind, are unrealistic, outdated and ineffective, according to Matt Blomstedt, commissioner of Education in Nebraska.

[\(See attached letter from Blomstedt\).](#)

These scores indicated that South Sioux City Community Schools, like almost all school districts in Nebraska, did not meet AYP. These are reports that measure the school district's performance in terms of the percentage of students who are at or above state-defined academic standard goals in reading, math, writing and science. For schools to meet AYP this year and last year, 100 percent of all students, regardless of special needs, English language mastery, or other life-impacting circumstances, must have met proficiency standards.

"Because of this unrealistic goal, a number of Nebraska schools will be unfairly labeled as *Not Met* or *In Need of Improvement*," Blomstedt said. "The Nebraska Department of Education does not agree with the current federal policy. I do not believe that all of our schools are low performing." He continued, "Nebraska educators are committed to each and every young person reaching his or her full potential and we are proud of the significant academic progress of our students. Our students, staff members and schools are not failures. By many measures, they are demonstrating unprecedented levels of achievement. We continue to strive for improvement and excellence in our public schools."

The State of the Schools Report publishes a large amount of numbers, labels and statistics on all school districts across Nebraska. The Report includes achievement from the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) tests, federal accountability decisions and additional measures, such as graduation rate. NeSA scores were released earlier this school year with results indicating South Sioux City Community Schools showed consistent increases over the previous year. Only schools receiving federal Title 1 funds are subject to the ramifications of the NCLB Act, and therefore some South Sioux City students are eligible for free tutoring or possible transfer to another school.

Commissioner Blomstedt said, "As a parent or caregiver, we encourage you to look at your child's individual growth and learning, along with evidence your school provides related to your child's progress instead of an outdated mislabeling requirement imposed by the federal government."

Statewide school district graduation rates will be released in November, and new state accountability information will be released in December. This new accountability system is called Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT). *For more information, go to the State Department of Education website: education.ne.gov.*

No Child Left Behind: A few facts

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law in 2002 and focused on an annual measure of student participation and achievement on statewide assessments and other indicators.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the term No Child Left Behind uses to measure whether your child's school has met a state's reading, math and writing goals. By 2014, 100 percent of all students were required to meet these criteria. Officially, NCLB was scheduled to be reauthorized in 2007, but was not. Therefore, it has stayed the law of the land not because people voted to confirm it, but because it has never received an up or down vote in Congress. It continues as a default law not as a reauthorized law, despite widespread public acknowledgement of its significant flaws.