

Making AYP: The Game (Pennsylvania Edition)

Schools and school districts across the country are under pressure to show that student performance on standardized tests is improving. Much of this pressure is based on the idea that clear expectations, combined with sanctions for poor performance, will motivate educators and students to try harder and do better. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is the most comprehensive expression of this pressure. NCLB sets performance targets that schools and districts must meet - referred to as "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP). NCLB also outlines a series of escalating consequences for not meeting AYP targets.

In response, school districts and state departments of education are providing large amounts of data about student performance and school progress to educators, parents, and the general public. The theory behind this emphasis on data is that if educators have more information about their students, they can improve the ways they teach and influence how well their students perform. This data can also be an important resource for parents and community members who want to find out about their local schools and become part of efforts to improve them.

Research for Action (RFA) is committed to developing a set of resources to help the public take advantage of the increasing availability of school performance data in order to influence policy and

improve schools. As part of this effort, RFA is pleased to partner with the *Philadelphia Public School Notebook* to provide tools designed to help educators and the public better understand AYP.

In addition, because AYP is only one among many possible means of evaluating students and schools, RFA will be looking at other ways of using data and measuring student achievement to help educators and the public become informed, active participants in school improvement efforts in the era of No Child Left Behind.

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based non-profit organization engaged in education research and evaluation. Founded in 1992, RFA works with public school districts, educational institutions, and community organizations to improve the educational opportunities for those traditionally disadvantaged by race/ethnicity, class, gender, language/cultural difference, and ability/disability.

Learning from Philadelphia's School Reform, led by RFA, is a four-year research and public awareness project assessing the current reform efforts in Philadelphia public schools. Future resources will examine how schools learn to use achievement data and will analyze student outcomes. For more information, please visit: www.researchforaction.org.

The Philadelphia Public School Notebook is an independent newspaper promoting informed public involvement in the Philadelphia schools. For more information, please visit www.thenotebook.org.

