

We have designed each "White Paper" to explore a fundamental educational principle and key issues engaging the education community we serve. It is our goal to partner with our readers as they meet the challenges they face.



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Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) & Castle Learning Online

With the passage of the **No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act** of 2001, each state had to implement assessments that measure students' performance against those standards (Goertz, 2001). States had to establish **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** targets for each student. Defining adequate yearly progress is left to states, but the law requires that AYP (a) be based primarily on academic indicators (for example, student performance on tests in reading or language arts and mathematics); (b) be technically rigorous; and (c) apply to school, district, and state levels of progress.

In the process of defining **AYPs**, progress for specified subgroups of students must be met. It would be insufficient for a school to demonstrate school-wide progress if certain groups of students failed to make adequate yearly progress. For schools and districts to meet state AYP objectives, students in each subgroup also must meet those objectives (as long as there are enough students in each group to ensure reliable statistical analyses). These groups would include economically disadvantaged students, major racial or ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and English language learners. (NCLB, 2002, Part A, Subpart 1, Sec. 1111, 2[c]).

States have three main tasks in defining **AYP**:

- Establishing a starting point or threshold.
- Developing a timeline to ensure progress, with a goal toward achieving performance at or above proficient levels in reading and mathematics by the end of the 2013-14 school year
- Continually increasing performance objectives over time, or setting the annual minimum percentages of students and subgroups of students who are to meet or exceed proficiency in mathematics and reading/language arts

Experts are concerned about the NCLB definition and timelines for getting students and all subgroups of students to the "proficient" standard. They expressed concern about the reliability of the tests used for high-stakes decisions, such as high school graduation, and that these decisions are founded on a robust data set about students' achievements. (Linn, Baker, and Betebenner, 2002)

Administrators have found that *Castle Learning Online* provides the day-to-day measure to determine whether students are performing adequately and allows them to predict the likelihood of success in achieving minimum progress annually. In the words of these educators:

- "The richness and friendliness of the program make students feel competent and, in consultation with subject teachers, they work with these students to overcome obstacles to learning."
- In a North Carolina school, a teacher described how teachers can meet or beat the predictions of an EVAS score (a device used to predict, through historical data, a student's success in a subject) with experiences where "students saw improvement beyond the predictors after using Castle Learning Online using it from two to three times each month."
- Another said that "when we used Castle Learning fairly extensively, scheduling one lesson every week at the computers, and some to complete for homework (as well as in class instruction and homework), every student scored a '4' on the End-of-Course exam in her school."

The AYP is a measure of success and change over time and *Castle Learning Online* has become a part of the supplemental teaching tools that can make sure change and success happen.