

Reading



Congress passed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Signed into law by President Bush in January 2002, NCLB has brought many significant changes to schools nationwide. This QUICK KEY is designed to help educators in schools and districts understand the basics of what NCLB means for their reading programs. It provides an overview of NCLB requirements for improving reading achievement and instruction as well as options for meeting those requirements

NCLB mandates that all public schoolchildren should be proficient in reading by the end of the 2013–14 school year. States are required to assess students in reading and to hold schools and districts accountable for ensuring that students make adequate yearly progress toward meeting this deadline.

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Six Key Concepts Related to Reading and Academic Improvement

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act emphasizes the following key concepts related to reading and academic improvement: all children reading at Grade 3, closing the achievement gaps, adequate yearly progress, all students proficient in reading by the end of the 2013–14 school year, annual student testing in reading, and scientifically based reading research.

All Children Reading at Grade 3

The first listed purpose of Reading First is “to ensure that every student can read at grade level or above not later than the end of Grade 3” (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1, Section 1201).

The Reading First program is designed to help eligible schools and districts select and implement K–3 reading programs that are based on scientific research. In addition, it provides professional development for teachers using such programs. Reading First also ensures accountability through screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based assessments that are ongoing, valid, and reliable.

Closing the Achievement Gaps

NCLB emphasizes “closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” (Title I, Section 1001, Statement of Purpose).

Adequate Yearly Progress

NCLB explains that “‘adequate yearly progress’ shall be defined by [each] state in a manner that applies the same high standards of academic achievement to all public elementary school and secondary students in the state; ...results in continuous and substantial academic improvement for all students; ... [and] includes separate measurable annual objectives for continuous and substantial improvement for each of the following: the achievement of all public elementary school and secondary school students; [and] the achievement of economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency” (Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1111[C]).

All Students Proficient in Reading by the End of the 2013–14 School Year

NCLB established the goal of all students reaching proficiency in reading by the end of the 2013–14 school year. Individual states can set their own timelines within that time frame for achieving this goal.

The law indicates the following: “Each state shall establish a timeline for adequate yearly progress. The timeline shall ensure that not later than 12 years after the end of the 2001–2002 school year, all students ... will meet or exceed the state’s proficient level of academic achievement on the state assessments” (Title I, Subpart 1, Section 1111[b][2][F]).

Annual Student Testing in Reading

NCLB requires that “the same academic assessments [be] used to measure the achievement of all children” (Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1111).

Beginning in the 2002–03 school year, NCLB required schools to administer reading assessments in each of three grade spans: Grades 3–5, Grades 6–9, and Grades 10–12. Beginning in the 2005–06 school year and continuing thereafter, NCLB has required schools to administer annual reading assessments to students in Grades 3–8 and at least once in high school.

Scientifically Based Reading Research

NCLB provides a definition: “The term ‘scientifically based reading research’ means research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties; and includes research that employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; [and] relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations” (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1, Section 1208).

NCLB Reading Programs

The six reading programs emphasized in NCLB are Reading First, Early Reading First, William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs, Improving Literacy Through School Libraries, Reading Is Fundamental—Inexpensive Book Distribution Program, and Striving Readers.

Early Reading First

Early Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 2) focuses on preschool-age children. It supports local efforts to accomplish the following:

- Enhance children’s development of knowledge and skills necessary for successful reading development in kindergarten and after.
- Enhance children’s early language and literacy development.

This program targets (1) districts serving high percentages or numbers of preschool-age children living in poverty, (2) public or private organizations serving preschool-age children located in these districts, and (3) partnerships of such districts or organizations.

Improving Literacy Through School Libraries

Improving Literacy Through School Libraries (Title I, Part B, Subpart 4) provides support for the following:

- Updating school library materials.
- Creating a technologically advanced school library media center.
- Employing a certified school library or media specialist.
- Increasing after-hours access to school libraries.
- Providing professional development.

An eligible district is one in which at least 20 percent of the students it serves are from families with incomes below the poverty line.

Reading First

Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1), which focuses on students in Kindergarten through Grade 3, does the following:

- Identifies the five essential elements of reading programs: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies.
- Requires reading programs to be based on scientifically based research.
- Requires classroom-based screening, instructional, and diagnostic reading assessments.
- Provides funding for professional development.

This program targets eligible districts and schools with (1) a high percentage or number of K–3 students reading below grade level, and (2) a high percentage or number of students living in poverty.

Reading Is Fundamental—Inexpensive Book Distribution Program

The Reading Is Fundamental—Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (Title V, Part D, Subpart 5) focuses on distributing books through nonprofit groups and public agencies. It aims to accomplish the following:

- Prepare younger children for reading.
- Motivate older children to read.

This program gives priority to initiatives of local public agencies, including districts and schools, and local private nonprofit groups or organizations that serve a substantial number or percentage of children with disabilities, foster children, homeless children, and institutionalized or incarcerated children.

Striving Readers

Striving Readers is a discretionary federal grant that began in 2005. Authorized as part of the 2005 Fiscal Year Appropriations Act under the Title I demonstration authority (Title I, Part E, Section 1502), it aims to do the following:

- Improve the reading skills of middle and high school-aged students in Title I-eligible schools who are reading below grade level.
- Support the implementation and evaluation of research-based reading interventions for struggling middle and high school readers.
- Utilize cross-disciplinary strategies for improving student literacy.
- May include professional development for subject-matter teachers.

This program targets adolescent readers from schools that are not meeting adequate yearly progress requirements set by NCLB or are reading below grade level.

William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs

The William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs (Title I, Part B, Subpart 3), also known as Even Start programs, support partnerships of districts and other public and private entities that do the following:

- Assist parents with literacy or basic education skills.
- Help parents become full partners in educating their children.
- Assist children in reaching their academic potential.
- Integrate adult education programs with early childhood programs.

This program targets areas with high percentages or numbers of children and families in need of services from such partnerships, as indicated by high levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and limited English proficiency.

NCLB Focus: Improving Student Reading in Grades K–3

Under Reading First (Title I, Part B, Subpart 1), district and school reading programs for K–3 students have the following goals:

- Include instruction, curriculum, and assessment on the five essential elements of reading:
 - **Phonemic Awareness.** The knowledge and manipulation of sounds in spoken words.
 - **Phonics.** The relationship between written and spoken letters and sounds.
 - **Fluency.** The ability to read with accuracy and with an appropriate rate, expression, and phrasing.
 - **Vocabulary.** The knowledge of words, their definitions, and context.
 - **Reading Comprehension Strategies.** Strategies such as monitoring comprehension, using graphic and semantic organizers, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing story structure, and summarizing—all of which aid in understanding of textual meaning.
- Be based on scientifically based research.
- Include classroom-based screening, instructional, and diagnostic reading assessments.
- Provide ongoing, high-quality professional development focused on the five essential elements of reading.

Under Reading First, school and district reading programs for K–3 students also can focus on:

- Building students' motivation to read.
- Integrating technology into students' opportunities to learn to read.

NCLB Focus: Improving Student Reading in Grades 4–12

NCLB does not specifically focus on improving district and school reading programs for students in Grades 4–12. However, under NCLB, districts and schools are accountable for providing reading programs through which students in Grades 4–12 make adequate yearly progress toward state reading standards.

Research suggests the following characteristics of effective reading programs:

- Highly qualified and well-trained reading teachers who understand the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students.
- At all grade levels, reading curricula that incorporate content-specific literacy instruction.
- At the secondary level, access to literacy coaches, who train teachers to work with students to improve their literacy skills.
- Access to multiple reading texts that are relevant yet challenging, that encourage critical reading, and that are based on critical literary sources.
- Explicit instruction in comprehension strategies.
- Strategies for building vocabulary knowledge that enables students to access word meanings from multiple texts.
- Ongoing, high-quality professional development that supports scientifically based research on reading instruction for all students.

Improving Student Reading Through NCLB: Key Questions for Educators

1. What are the reading standards in your state or district?
2. When working with secondary students, does your state, district, or school incorporate the two parts of the literacy coaching standards (leadership standards for all coaches regardless of subject area and content-area literacy standards for the specific needs of each subject area)?
3. How are students achieving with respect to the reading standards? What, if any, are the achievement gaps between or among subgroups of your students?
4. What improvements are needed in your reading curriculum, instruction, and assessments for all students to meet or exceed your state's reading standards?
5. How well are your reading curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with your state's reading standards in the depth of topics covered across grade levels?
6. What is the scientific research basis for your reading curriculum, instruction, and assessments? Are your proposed improvements in reading curriculum, instruction, and assessments based on scientific research?
7. How well do your school or district's professional development offerings connect to needed improvements in reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
8. Are the professional development options for your school or district informed by scientifically based research in the area of reading?

Reference

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002). Retrieved January 2, 2007, from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>

Additional Reading Related to Grades K–3

Armbruster, C. C., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2003). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read—Kindergarten through grade 3* (2nd edition). Washington, DC: Partnership for Reading. Retrieved January 2, 2007, from <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/Cierra.pdf>

Learning First Alliance (2000). *Every child reading: A professional development guide*. Baltimore, MD: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved January 2, 2007, from <http://www.learningfirst.org/lfa-web/rp?pa=doc&docId=50>

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Retrieved January 2, 2007, from http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/upload/smallbook_pdf.pdf

Additional Reading Related to Grades 4–12

Alvermann, D. E. (2002). Effective literacy instruction for adolescents. *Journal of Literacy Research, 34*(2), 189–208. Retrieved January 2, 2007, from <http://www.coe.uga.edu/reading/faculty/alvermann/effective2.pdf>

Harste, J. C. (2003). What do we mean by literacy now? *Voices From the Middle, 10*(3), 8–12.

Jetton, T. L., & Dole, J. A. (Eds.) (2004). *Adolescent literacy research and practice*. New York: Guilford Press.

Phelps, S. (2005). *Ten years of research on adolescent literacy, 1994-2004: A review*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved January 2, 2007, from <http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/literacy/tenYears.pdf>

Robb, L. (2000). *Teaching reading in middle school: A strategic approach to teaching reading that improves comprehension and thinking*. New York: Scholastic.

Strickland, D. S., & Alvermann, D. E. (2004). Learning and teaching literacy in grades 4–12: Issues and challenges. In D. S. Strickland & D. E. Alvermann (Eds.), *Bridging the literacy achievement gap: Grades 4–12* (pp. 1–12). New York: Teachers College Press.

Key Resources

Learning Point Associates has resources to assist you in understanding and implementing NCLB in your school or district. Visit our main website at www.learningpt.org and our NCLB Implementation Center website containing NCLB information at www.learningpt.org/nclb/center/.

U.S. Department of Education Websites

No Child Left Behind (website)

www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=mr

No Child Left Behind (law)

www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf

Resources for Parents and Educators

Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)

www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal

Especially for Parents

www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml?src=pn

Help My Child Read: Reading Resources

www.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml?src=qc

Just for Teachers

www.ed.gov/teachers/landing.jhtml?src=pn

No Child Left Behind: A Desktop Reference

www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/reference.pdf

Support for Administrators

www.ed.gov/admins/landing.jhtml?src=pn

NCLB Programs

Early Reading First

www.ed.gov/programs/earlyreading/index.html

Even Start

www.ed.gov/programs/evenstartformula/index.html

Improving Literacy Through School Libraries

www.ed.gov/programs/lsl/index.html

Reading First

www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/nclb-reading-first.html

Reading Is Fundamental—Inexpensive Book Distribution Program

www.ed.gov/programs/rif/index.html

Striving Readers

www.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders/index.html

Reading Organization Websites

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement

www.ciera.org

Center on Instruction

www.centeroninstruction.org

International Reading Association

www.ira.org

Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse

www.literacycoachingonline.org

National Institute for Literacy

www.nifl.gov

National Reading Panel

www.nationalreadingpanel.org

The website of your state education agency also is a key resource for understanding and implementing NCLB.

The Quick Key Series

Learning Point Associates developed the *Quick Key* series to assist educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in understanding and implementing the No Child Left Behind Act. The following *Quick Keys* are available online at www.learningpt.org/QuickKeys/.



Quick Key 1

Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: Reading



Quick Key 2

Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: Opportunities for Schools in Need of Improvement



Quick Key 3

Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: Technology Integration



Quick Key 4

Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: Mathematics and Science



Quick Key 5

Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: English Proficiency



Quick Key 6

Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: Teacher Quality



Quick Key 7

Understanding the No Child Left Behind Act: Scientifically Based Research



Quick Key 8 Action Guide

Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act: Teacher Quality Improves Student Achievement



Quick Key 9 Action Guide

Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act: Strategies to Improve High Schools



Quick Key 10 Action Guide

Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act: Using Student Engagement to Improve Adolescent Literacy



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