

NCLB Making a Difference in Utah



- “Until the No Child Left Behind federal program, Utah’s public schools weren’t truly accountable. Utah has had statewide testing programs for many years, but the test results were little but a snapshot of academic performance. There were no carrots to reward top-performing schools or schools that have demonstrated substantial improvement. Likewise, there were no penalties for schools that perform poorly, aside from the sting of making the test results public. ... [I]t is difficult to argue with the academic progress that has been made in Utah under NCLB. Many schools that had traditionally had poor scores on statewide assessments met the challenge presented by the AYP standards. School administrators and faculty committed to do whatever it took to improve academic achievement and student success. As one principal in the Salt Lake School District explained, ‘It’s not as if we weren’t working hard; we [just] might not have been working as smart as we needed to be.’” (Editorial, *Deseret Morning News*, 4/10/05)
- “Some schools have made extraordinary efforts to improve academic achievement and school climate. For example, Ogden’s Central Middle School teachers and administrators visited children at home, asked parents to sign compacts with the school to help children do well in class and held regular faculty meetings to identify students who weren’t showing up to school. That broader commitment to students and the school community means Central Middle School is working its way off the ‘school improvement list.’” (*Deseret Morning News*, 4/10/05)
- “We [school officials] acknowledge that there are demographic challenges in West Valley, such as non-English speakers, immigrant children with no previous formal education, poverty and high crime rates. We have been focusing our expertise on applying proven interventions to mitigate these challenges and have been making measurable progress. ... The bottom line: Students in West Valley schools have improved to the point that their schools received only 13 academic progress ‘no’s’ out of an overall 1,040 possible scores. Our minority students are closing the academic gap between themselves and non-minority students. We’re helping them do it in West Valley City and across the district in a variety of ways:
 - Each elementary school has one or more reading specialists working with first-graders not yet reading at grade level.
 - Four Reading First schools (one in WVC) receive federal funds to help all K-3 students become proficient readers through scientifically based approaches and assessments.
 - The best way to close the education gap is to narrow it early. We have placed at least one preschool classroom in every Title I elementary school, increased sessions from 143 to 222 this year, and we target kindergarten readiness among our children of poverty.
 - More than 1,100 Granite District teachers have received their English as a Second Language endorsements.
 - Schools have established literacy programs for parents. Parents who read are better resources for children learning to read.
 - ‘After school’ programs provide tutoring in math and reading at the elementary level, and secondary students have ‘credit recovery’ options to make up courses necessary for high school graduation.”(*Salt Lake Tribune*, 6/11/05)