



Bayard Public Schools

Dedicated to Quality Education
www.bayardpublicschools.org

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Elementary
(308) 586-1211

Principal
Matthew McLaughlin

Counselor K-6
Mark Keszler

October 29, 2014

Dear Families,

The federal education legislation, No Child Left Behind, mandates that all students must be proficient in reading and math academic standards by this year. Schools are expected to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward that goal. The state reading goal for last year was to have 100% of all students in grades 3-6 proficient on the reading and math standards.

Additional information about how our school compared to other schools in the state will be available on the State of the Schools Report which became available for public viewing on October 24, 2014.

If a school does not meet the state goal two years in a row, in the same grade level and same subject, they are identified as "In Need of Improvement." A school can earn a change in School Improvement Status after all subgroups meet the AYP goals for two consecutive years.

Bayard Elementary School is in year 1 of Title I School Improvement Status. The following table illustrates our students' overall performance over the past three years.

Years	Reading (Overall percentage that meets or exceeds on NeSA)	Math (Overall percentage that meets or exceeds on NeSA)
2011-2012	72%	61%
2012-2013	77%	61%
2013-2014	77%	66%

One sub-group in grades 3-6 did not meet the 2013-2014 goal in reading and math. Bayard Elementary will be listed as being in a School Improvement Status until all subgroups are able to meet the reading and math goals for two years in a row.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires each school identified for Title I School Improvement to offer the Public School Choice to all students who attend the identified school. Our students do not have another choice of schools within our district and as a result our students do not qualify for Public School Choice. The following URL for the Nebraska Department of Education can be used to compare Bayard Public Schools with other schools across the state of Nebraska





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<http://www.education.ne.gov/> or by using <http://reportcard.education.ne.gov/>.

Because of the status, the school must develop and implement a two-year plan to help the subgroups to meet the goal. The school improvement team (which is comprised of community members, families and school employees) will continue ongoing work to better identify and meet the current needs of students in our building. If your family would like to become involved in this process, please contact the school.

All students benefit from parental involvement in education. Asking questions, having students read aloud, and setting aside a time and place for homework are only a few of the things that you can do to support learning for your child. Your child's teacher can give you additional strategies to work on at home. Student achievement is a partnership between school and home and a strong partnership has been proven to be effective in helping student achievement. Please call me if you have any questions about the AYP status or the plan to improve the academic achievement of all subgroups at the elementary level.

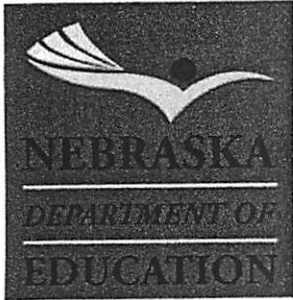
Sincerely,

Matthew McLaughlin

Bayard Elementary Principal

Enclosed: Letter From Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt





Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D., Commissioner
Scott Swisher, Ed.D., Deputy Commissioner

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To: Parents and Caregivers
From: Matthew Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education
Subject: Nebraska's Commitment to Every Student, Every Day
Date: September 30, 2014

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was passed in 1965 during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration as part of the War on Poverty. The act emphasized equal access to education, established high standards and accountability, and authorized federally funded education programs administered by individual states. Congress amended ESEA in 2002 and reauthorized it as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The law was scheduled to be reauthorized in 2007; to date Congress has not taken the necessary steps to update this law.

When states and districts agree to accept federal funds, there are strings attached. Attached to NCLB Title I funding is the stipulation to have statewide assessments and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decisions for every public school in the state. Under NCLB, the proficiency goal for school year 2013-14 for Reading and Mathematics assessments was set at 100%. According to the NCLB rules, every student-- regardless of disabilities, English language proficiency, or other life-impacting circumstances--must be proficient in reading and math as measured by state assessments. Because of this unrealistic goal, a number of Nebraska schools will be mislabeled as *Not Met* or *In Need of Improvement*.

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. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education has granted waivers from the unrealistic expectations of NCLB. Common sense tells us that one child in one grade in one subject area scoring just below a "proficiency cut score" should not brand an entire school community as failing. Yet that is exactly what has happened under NCLB. As a result of this faulty logic, some schools or districts in Nebraska have not met the NCLB requirement for the 2013-14 school year.

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. While not all students have reached proficiency, the use of targeted resources to assist struggling students and schools has had an impact which is seen in performance data not taken into account by NCLB. 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.

We are committed to continuous improvement. Gains in student achievement are due to the collaborative efforts of teachers, staff, parents, and community members through high-quality instruction, effective leadership, and partnerships. We know that tests are an important part of teaching and learning, but we also understand that basing a student's achievement on a single assessment does not capture everything that is important for our children's learning journey.

As a state, our biggest challenge is finding better ways to engage and support the learning of every student, every day. Nebraska is developing a system for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT). The State Board of Education believes that Nebraska citizens—through the Constitution, the Nebraska Legislature, the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and other policy makers—are responsible for the total design of this education system. While acknowledging that this education system will be influenced by others, (federal government, other state leaders, and local policy makers) this system will be dependent on and driven by local boards of education, administrators, teachers, parents, communities, and students. This belief requires that we listen well, communicate better, and engage leaders and stakeholders across the state. The goal is to build a quality accountability system that is meaningful to Nebraska.

As a parent or caregiver, we encourage you to look at your own child's individual growth and learning, along with evidence your school provides related to your child's progress instead of a an outdated mislabeling requirement imposed by the federal government. We also encourage you to work with your local educators to ensure that every child is challenged and supported, learning, and thriving. Schools prosper when parents and caregivers are involved as the first teachers of their children.