

October 2011

Dear Sunnyside Parents,

This year marks the ninth year of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act – a government program that both the public and lawmakers agree is in need of significant reform in order to improve its credibility. Why does NCLB lack the public’s faith? Among several reasons, many question the usefulness of requiring that all schools in the nation make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as determined by student performance in math and reading administered by one state-mandated test alone.

Even the state’s Education Commissioner says, “This is not a fair, valid or accurate way of measuring how schools are really doing.” I invite you to read a letter from the Commissioner explaining why the state is pursuing relief from this law at [www.moundsviewschools.org/pdf07/AYP letter from Commissioner 11-12.pdf](http://www.moundsviewschools.org/pdf07/AYP%20letter%20from%20Commissioner%2011-12.pdf).

For the first seven years under the NCLB Act, Sunnyside Elementary School successfully met all AYP goals. However, based on the results of one exam in 2009, a handful of students in two specific demographic categories did not meet increasingly demanding goals in either reading or math. This year, Sunnyside improved its results and a handful of students in only one category did not meet the target. We are required by the federal government to refer to this demographic category of students as Free/Reduced Price Lunch. Although this does not mean our school is underperforming as a whole, NCLB has designated Sunnyside as a school in need of improvement. To review how other schools around the state are performing please refer to the Minnesota Department of Education’s Website, School Report Cards, <http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do>.

Continuous improvement is a goal at Sunnyside and throughout Mounds View Public Schools. We believe we have many tools in place to ensure success for all of our students:

- Individual student growth goals in math and reading.
- Appropriately leveled instruction based on individual student needs.
- Building-wide goals and grade-level specific goals focusing on math and reading, as well as building-wide staff collaboration where student growth and achievement is the focus of all discussions.
- Targeted student support through Title I.
- Extended Day opportunities through expanded Elementary Targeted Services (ETS).

It’s equally important to note that we are committed to our own District-administered testing that does not rely entirely on one exam. Instead, our teachers administer a variety of useful assessments that measure ongoing progress for individual students. This gives Sunnyside classroom teachers valuable, student-specific information they can use to

modify teaching methods to improve achievement.

For several years, as a District, we tempered our pride in meeting the NCLB requirements because they reflected student performance on one state test, and experts and analysts agree it is virtually inevitable that most schools in the nation will eventually miss proficiency targets set by their state. In the same way, we should temper our concern now. Public opinion surveys consistently show overwhelming skepticism of the NCLB act's integrity and an increasing public belief that this federal act does not present a fair picture of a school's performance.

I am confident your student is receiving an exceptional education at Sunnyside, and as always, all parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in a variety of school improvement efforts. To learn more about joining our improvement efforts, please contact me directly for more information.

NCLB rules allow you to transfer your child to a school within our district not identified for improvement if you so choose. Your option is Pinewood Elementary School in Mounds View. Transportation will be provided by the District as long as Sunnyside remains in Title I School Improvement. To pursue this option, parents must first contact me at 651-621-7600 by October 17. After this contact, parents also must then contact Bill Book, Principal of Pinewood Elementary School (651-621-7500). He can provide information on the academic achievement of his school.

While the future of the NCLB Act remains uncertain, you can count on this certainty: Sunnyside's well-deserved reputation as an exceptional school will remain intact as we continue to work tirelessly to provide the best education possible for all students.

Sincerely,  
Paul Good  
Principal

*Para traducir esta carta en Español, por favor llame a Aldo Cantellano al [651 621 6315](tel:6516216315)*

*Yog koj xa tau tsab ntawv no txais ua lus Hmoob thov hu rau Mee Yang ntawm [651-621-6743](tel:6516216743).*

*Warqadan oo af Somali ku turjuman, Fadlan la soo xiriir Ayan Esse, [651-621-7116](tel:6516217116).*