



Adequate Yearly Progress for No Child Left Behind: Consider the Influence of Students' Perception of School



Whether one agrees or disagrees with the **No Child Left Behind** legislation, it is the standard by which public K-12 education is currently evaluated and ultimately either rewarded or punished.

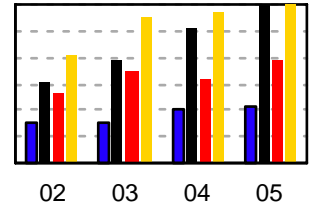
Governors, school boards, school superintendents, principals and teachers all understand the implications when schools do not make adequate yearly progress ([Adequate Yearly Progress](#)) as mandated by **No Child Left Behind**.

Several factors contribute to the determination of adequate yearly progress, with students' performance on standardized assessments contributing the most. To this end, teachers and school administrators engage in various strategies aimed at bringing the lowest performers to grade level and rated as proficient.

While improving the academic performance of all children is the primary focus of the NCLB legislation, providing students with a safe environment in which to attend school is another top priority of our country as evidenced by the Safe Schools for the 21st Century provision of the NCLB legislation ([Safe Schools for 21st Century](#)).

Research reveals that students' perception of how safe they feel in their school is related to their attitude toward school, school attendance, and academic performance.

IOD, Inc. recently conducted a study of a large school district in which middle school students' perception of school safety was examined. School safety was measured in terms of four specific factors. Factor I measured the students' perceptions of teachers' knowledge and roles in handling crises and emergencies, violence, and bullying.



Factor II examined students' views of how well campus security and law enforcement control and maintain a safe school environment. Factor III investigated the influence of the school's visible environment, such as clean school grounds, adequate lighting, and clean, odor-free bathrooms. Finally, Factor IV asked students about the existence and application of policies for handling violence and other incidents of disruptive behavior. **The specific question of interest to this newsletter is:**

What is the relationship between students' perception of school safety and their reading and math performance on the state's annual tests of proficiency?

The results of the study provide interesting insights. The relationships between the reading and math achievement and 5th and 7th grade students' perceptions of school safety were examined through bi-variate correlations that are displayed within the following table:

Students' Perception of School Safety: Factors I - IV				
Student's Annual Performance on Reading & Math	<i>Knowledge & roles in handling crisis</i>	<i>Control & maintenance of campus safety</i>	<i>Visible environment</i>	<i>Policy for handling student behavior</i>
• Percentage of students below proficiency on reading	0.385	0.443	0.320	0.492
• Percentage of students below proficiency on math	0.413	0.428	0.353	0.480

School Safety Impacts Student Performance

All of the correlations were statistically significant except one, and that was the correlation between the percentage of students rated as below proficient in reading and school safety Factor III: the influence of the school's visible environment, such as clean school grounds, adequate lighting, and clean, odor-free bathrooms, on the students' perception of safety ($r = .320$).

In general, these findings reveal that as the percentage of students who do not feel safe in their schools increases, the higher the percentage of students who are not able to reach proficiency on the states' annual measure of performance in reading and math.



In this study the strongest relationships were found between Factor IV: the existence and application of policies for handling violence and other incidents of disruptive behavior, and the percentage of 5th and 7th grade students who failed to reach proficiency in reading ($r = .492$) and math ($r = .480$).

These results should not be interpreted to mean that higher academic performance is caused by higher perceptions of a safe school. These results merely point to the existence of a strong relationship between academic performance and safe schools. (see [School Climate](#) for a discussion of the relationship between school climate and achievement)

Improving students' perceptions in each of the four factors constituting school safety in this study would necessitate different interventions on the part of school board, district superintendents, principals and teachers. For instance, providing additional training for teachers on how to appropriately handle disruptive classroom behavior would address Factor I of the study on student's perceptions, where as ensuring that discipline policies are fair, appropriate and consistently applied would address Factor IV of the study regarding how students view the existence and utilization of policy for handling violence and disruption.

The NCLB stakes are high, and improving school safety is clearly associated with the requirement of making Adequate Yearly Progress. IOD believes the results of this study of school safety's relationship to student performance will be of benefit to the readers of this newsletter by providing additional solutions about how to most effectively impact school performance.



For more information about the information contained in this newsletter, please email IOD at jcurtis@iodinc.com or call 407.265.6111.
