RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

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Table of Contents:

THE RHODE ISLAND STATE CONTEXT AND NCLB

On January 8, 2002, the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB required states to establish a single accountability system that includes every school and district. Rhode Island proposed an accountability model incorporating NCLB requirements to the US Department of Education for approval and this model was first implemented to interpret performance on students' assessments during the 2002-03 school year.

In 1997, the Rhode Island General Assembly enacted Article 31. That legislation put into place a policy framework and accountability system that included all Rhode Island public schools. Article 31 required schools to align their educational processes with the Rhode Island school reform agenda, as outlined in the Comprehensive Education Strategy (CES). At the core of this agenda was the expectation that the Department of Education would create high standards and expect high achievement for all students. Article 31 required the Commissioner to make judgments about school performance on a regular basis. This requirement was given additional weight with the NCLB legislation. As a result, the Board of Regents and the Commissioner set forth clear expectations and targets for schools to improve overall performance and close gaps in performance between groups of students.

Rhode Island introduced the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) for students in grades 3-8 in October 2005 to further comply with the requirements of NCLB. The NECAP high school assessments in reading, writing and mathematics were introduced in October 2007. A statewide assessment of science was introduced at grades 4, 8 and 11 in May 2008. Beginning in the 2008-09 school year, Rhode Island adopted the National Governor's Association (NGA) four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate formula. Beginning in 2011, Rhode Island adopted a new hybrid four-year and five-year cohort graduation rate formula.

This document is the updated version of the Technical Bulletin for classifying schools and districts based on October 2010 NECAP performance and graduation/attendance through the summer of 2010.

THE INDEXING SYSTEM

Early experience with the New Standards Reference Examinations (NSRE) in English Language Arts and Mathematics demonstrated that simply tallying students meeting the standard did not acknowledge the progress many schools were making as students moved from showing *Little Evidence of Achievement* to *Nearly Achieved the Standard*. Therefore, Rhode Island created an indexing system that recognizes the progress schools can make in moving students from the lower to the higher levels of student performance. This indexing approach was continued for use with the NECAP assessments.

Getting all students to meet the standard depends upon a number of factors relating to school change. These include leadership, resources, rigorous curriculum, up-to-date materials, expert

instruction, a safe and healthy environment, and a supportive community, to name a few. Because the single most important factor in student achievement is the effectiveness of the teacher, it is imperative that teachers engage in professional development that enhances their knowledge, skills, and ability to teach students academic content, process skills and strategies to solve problems as demanded by the standards-based classroom.

Standards-based classrooms require students to do more than memorize facts and use rules. Standards require students to organize data, think critically, analyze information, communicate clearly, critique ideas and materials, apply knowledge, use technology, predict results, and solve problems. These demands for higher levels of thinking skills require a classroom environment filled with opportunities for students to experience situations requiring the application of these skills and abilities.

For many teachers, teaching in a standards-based classroom was a transition from how they were trained to teach. Teachers have been engaging in professional development to develop their expertise and ability to create a standards-based environment. Changes in beliefs and practice have to occur before changes in student performance on the state assessments will be seen. Because gains in student performance are not immediate, giving schools credit for smaller changes through an index system recognizes the efforts made by schools.

The following pages describe the process that was used to classify schools and districts in the 2010-11 school year. It mirrors the process that was used in the 2009-10 school year, with the exception of the use of the new hybrid graduation rate.

ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

Rhode Island's Assessment and Accountability System is aligned to Grade Level/Span Expectations (GLEs/GSEs) that have been presented to districts to use as guides for assessment and curriculum development. For each of the reading, writing and mathematics assessments, students receive a three-digit scaled score. The first digit of the scaled score indicates the grade level of the test; the following two digits indicate the actual score. Student results are also reported under NECAP in four achievement levels (Proficient with Distinction, Proficient, Partially Proficient and Substantially Below Proficient). Cut scores between the different achievement levels vary for each grade and content area. (The process for calculating scaled scores from raw scores and for setting these cut points is described elsewhere.)

For calculating index proficiency scores, the four achievement level categories are expanded to six categories, to differentiate between students who are Substantially Below Proficient:

- Proficient with Distinction
- Proficient, Partially Proficient
- Substantially Below Proficient – Upper Range
- Substantially Below Proficient – Lower Range
- No Evidence of Achievement

Students who are at the very bottom of the scaled score range (i.e. scale score of 300, 400, etc.) fall in the "No Evidence of Achievement" category. (Please note: These students contribute to the school's participation rate indicator, since the students were attempting to take the test.) Whether a student's scaled score falls in the Upper or Lower Range of "Substantially Below Proficient" is based on whether or not it was above or below the midpoint of the range of Substantially Below Proficient scaled scores, as outlined in Table 1.

***Table 1*. Mid-Points for Scaled Score Range Dividing Substantially Below Proficient**

	Reading	**Mathematics**	**Writing**
Grade 3	315	315	
Grade 4	415	415	
Grade 5	514	516	513
Grade 6	614	616	
Grade 7	714	716	
Grade 8	814	816	813
Grade 11	1114	1116	****

NOTE: Midpoints are not the same for each grade or content area.
** Grade 11 writing scores are not placed on a scale. Cut-points are based on the scoring rubric which yields a maximum of 12 points (each essay is scored twice). A score below 2 points defines the lower range of "Substantially below proficient." A score of 2 or 3 defines the upper range of "Substantially below proficient."

October NECAP tests are used to assess the prior year's achievement. Therefore, before accountability computations are done, students' scores are assigned to the previous grade and to the school in which the student was enrolled at the time. Table 2 illustrates the attribution of test scores to the prior year using the terms "Tested Year" and "Teaching Year." Students in elementary and middle schools were tested in October (testing year), but they were tested against the grade level expectations (GLEs) of the prior year (teaching year). For example, reading, writing and mathematics test scores of students tested in the eighth grade are assigned to the school where each child was a seventh grade student before the Index Proficiency scores for a school are calculated.

Table 2: **Assignment of Scores from Testing Year to Teaching Year**

Grade During October Testing (*Testing Year*)	**Grade Assigned for Accountability** (*Teaching Year*)
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7	6
8	7
11	10

NOTE: Index scores are calculated from the teaching year data file, but participation rates are calculated from the testing year data file.

If a student was not continuously enrolled in a school from October 1, 2009 to the end of the 2009-10 school year, then their scores are excluded from Index Score calculations. In addition, certain students are exempted from analysis (see the Student Exemptions section below). In addition, 12th graders and 11th graders who were held back who were re-tested on 11th grade NECAP assessment (provided that they received a valid score the previous year) are also excluded from Index Score calculations.

INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE CALCULATIONS

To create index proficiency rates for the school, points are assigned for each student corresponding to each achievement level, as shown in Table 3. An overall school average is calculated for each content area (Reading, Math and Writing) for all grades combined. An overall school ELA index Proficiency Score is then calculated based 80% on the Reading score and 20% on the Writing score.

Table 3. **Rhode Island's Index Proficiency Score**

Achievement Level – NECAP	Index Proficiency Score
Proficient with Distinction	100
Proficient	100
Partially Proficient	75
Substantially Below Proficient (*Upper Range*)	50
Substantially Below Proficient (*Lower Range*)	25
No Evidence of Achievement	0

Note: Except for students who are exempted for specific reasons (e.g. 12th grade students who are repeating the test), all students who take the NECAP tests contribute to the schools test participation rate. This includes students with scores of 300, 400, etc., since those students were attempting to take the test, even though they showed no evidence of achievement.
Note: Students who participate in Rhode Island's Alternate Assessment also contribute to school and district accountability in a similar manner to NECAP, although no scaled scores are derived on the Alternate Assessment.

For the 2011 classification of all schools, the following steps are taken to compute ELA and Mathematics Index Proficiency Scores using results from the October 2010 NECAP assessments. (The steps are done separately for ELA and Mathematics.)

Step 1: Assign each student scale score to the grade and school of the prior school year (2009-10).

Step 2: Eliminate students who were not continuously enrolled from October 1, 2009 to the end of the 2009-10 school year in the school to which the score was assigned.

Step 3: Assign separate Reading, Mathematics and Writing Index Proficiency scores for every student as defined in Figure 1: Rhode Island's Index Proficiency Scale.

Step 4: Add the Reading index scores across all students and grades within a school. Mathematics and Writing index scores would be calculated in the same way.

Step 5: Divide the sum of index scores by the number of students with an index score (across tested grades) at the time of testing (adjusted for valid exemptions and for step 2 above).

Step 6: For the English Language Arts index, apply the school Writing index score as 20 percent and apply the Reading index score as the other 80 percent.

District index proficiency scores for each content area are calculated using a similar process, combining student scores for all grades from all district schools as well as for students tested at "outplacement" schools.

BASELINES

As mandated by NCLB, calculating the baselines in ELA and Mathematics was a crucial step in determining the performance of schools and creating a cohesive accountability system. The baselines determined how much students needed to improve between 2002 and 2014 (the year by which NCLB legislation specifies that 100% of students will be proficient in English Language Arts and mathematics).

Rhode Island's baselines were calculated by averaging 2000, 2001, and 2002 NSRE results. Baselines were established for ELA and mathematics at three levels of schooling – elementary (grades K-5), middle (grades 6-8) and high (grades 9-12). After each school's Index Proficiency Scores were calculated, the schools were rank-ordered from high to low separately for each level of school (elementary, middle and high) for ELA and Mathematics. Starting from the lowest score, the score of the school in which 20% of Rhode Island's total enrollment at the tested grade was enrolled cumulatively became the baseline. In other words, 80% of the students in the state were in schools at or above the baseline and 20% of students were in schools that had scores below the baseline. This step was repeated for ELA and Mathematics for each grade span, as well as for the Graduation Rate for high schools. Table 4 demonstrates this calculation using a hypothetical state with 30 elementary schools.

***Table 4*. Elementary Mathematics: Model for Determining the 2002 Baseline**

School	Index Proficiency Score	Enrollment	Cumulative Enrollment
1	44.2	40	40
2	46.9	60	100
3	52.5	120	220
4	58.6	80	300
5	**61.7**	**100**	**400**
6	63.9	60	460
⇩	⇩	⇩	⇩
30	92.4	50	2000 students

NOTE: Elementary Baseline was set when Cumulative Enrollment was 20% of the total state elementary enrollment.

INTERMEDIATE GOALS

Another requirement of NCLB is that states identify at least five Intermediate Goals between the 2002 baselines and the sixth and final 2014 goal of 100% proficiency. By law, the Intermediate Goals for elementary, middle, and high schools must increase in equal increments but they need not be spaced evenly over the twelve-year time span. This distinction allowed for some flexibility. The Intermediate Goals were established using the following method of calculation:

(100 – Baseline) ÷ 6 = X

Baseline + X = Intermediate Goal 1

IG1 + X = IG 2, etc…

Rhode Island spaced the Intermediate Goals unevenly over the twelve-year time span. There is a three-year span between each of the first three Intermediate Goals and then they increase each year until 2014. The uneven time span was designed to give schools below the 2002 baseline an opportunity to implement their school improvement plans and to catch up before Intermediate Goals began to increase each year. Steady growth is expected beginning in 2011 because of the belief that larger gains will be seen as schools' improvement plans gain momentum. Figure 4 shows the increase of Intermediate Goals from 2002 to 2014. These intermediate goals remain in effect and have not been altered by introduction of the NECAP assessments.

Table 5. **Chart of Intermediate Goals** [*Index Proficiency Scores*]

	Elementary		**Middle**		**High**	
Year	***ELA***	***Math***	***ELA***	***Math***	***ELA***	***Math***
2013-14	100	100	100	100	100	100
2013	96.1	93.7	94.5	91.1	93.6	90.8
2012	92.1	87.3	89.2	82.1	87.4	81.6
2011	88.1	80.9	83.9	73.1	81.2	72.4
2008	84.1	74.5	78.6	64.1	75.0	63.2
2005	80.1	68.1	73.3	55.1	68.8	54.0
2001-02 ***Baseline***	76.1	61.7	68.0	46.1	62.6	44.8

ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES (AMOS)

Accountability determinations for schools and districts are based on what are called the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). AMOs for each year are the same as the most recent Intermediate Goal. For example, the AMOs for 2003 and 2004 are the same as the 2002 baseline and AMOs for 2006 and 2007 are the Intermediate Goal for 2005. Table 6 displays both the Intermediate Goals and the AMOs from 2002 through 2014.

Table 6. **Chart of Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)** [*Index Proficiency Scores*]

	Elementary		**Middle**		**High**	
Year	***ELA***	***Math***	***ELA***	***Math***	***ELA***	***Math***
2013-14	100	100	100	100	100	100
2013	96.1	93.7	94.5	91.1	93.6	90.8
2012	92.1	87.3	89.2	82.1	87.4	81.6
2011 *	88.1	80.9	83.9	73.1	81.2	72.4
2010	**84.1**	**74.5**	**78.6**	**64.1**	**75.0**	**63.2**
2009	**84.1**	**74.5**	**78.6**	**64.1**	**75.0**	**63.2**
2008	84.1	74.5	78.6	64.1	75.0	63.2
2007	**80.1**	**68.1**	**73.3**	**55.1**	**68.8**	**54.0**
2006	**80.1**	**68.1**	**73.3**	**55.1**	**68.8**	**54.0**
2005	80.1	68.1	73.3	55.1	68.8	54.0
2004	**76.1**	**61.7**	**68.0**	**46.1**	**62.6**	**44.8**
2003	**76.1**	**61.7**	**68.0**	**46.1**	**62.6**	**44.8**
2001-02 *Baseline*	76.1	61.7	68.0	46.1	62.6	44.8

** AMO targets for the 2011 classification of schools using October 2010 NECAP scores*

Note: The process of setting baselines and Intermediate Goals was not repeated using the new NECAP data. Alternate simulation models using the preliminary elementary and middle school NECAP results showed diverse results that were not compelling improvements over the original baselines and trajectories to the year 2014. Following guidance from the Technical Advisory Committee and in accordance with the goal of avoiding changing processes of the accountability system without a compelling reason, values adopted under NSRE were kept in place for the NECAP assessments. The grade 11 trajectory has also been kept in place to maintain a position of high and meaningful standards.

CLOSING EQUITY GAPS

NCLB mirrors Rhode Island's Comprehensive Education Strategy (CES) in that it requires the steady improvement of subgroups of the student population. In the Rhode Island accountability system, each subgroup's progress must be calculated separately. Each school's and district's data must be disaggregated into the following eight subgroups: Economically Disadvantaged (lunch status), Native American, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Special Needs (IEP), and Limited English Proficient (LEP).

All subgroups are held to the same baselines, Intermediate Goals, and AMOs outlined in Table 6 above. For reliability purposes, accountability for subgroups is applied when there are 45 students in the subgroup for analysis. For all schools, the count of students in the analysis is based on the current year of testing summed over all grades with test scores. If there are fewer than 45 students in a subgroup at the school level, there may be 45 or more at the district level, so these subgroups would be included in the district-level accountability calculations and used to determine the district classification. In addition, students served in outplacement programs are added into the district-level file for calculations.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY STATUS OF SCHOOLS

Schools have a maximum of ***37 targets*** to pass which derive from the following steps:

1. Comparison of school-wide ELA and Math Index Proficiency Scores to the state AMOs for 2010-2011;

2. Comparison to the state AMOs for 2010-11 for disaggregated subgroups of students, where the number of students reliably supports such an analysis. Data will be analyzed when there are 45 students in a subgroup. The 45 criterion is based on the summation of all eligible test scores in the school during one cycle of testing, after attribution to the prior year.

3. Determination of whether the AMO has been met graduation rate (for high schools) or attendance rates (for elementary and middle schools). High schools with less than 30 students in the cohort are considered to have met AMO.

4. Determination of whether at least 95% of the students school-wide participated in both the ELA and mathematics assessments. This 95% participation requirement is also reviewed for all student subgroups with at least 45 students at the time of testing (October).

Depending on the number of students in a school and in each subgroup, school classification decisions are made using up to 37 targets, as shown in Table 7 below. The classification of districts is made by reviewing these data elements for each educational level: 37 targets for high schools, 37 for middle schools, and 37 for elementary schools.

Table 7. **Accountability Targets**

School-level performance in ELA and Mathematics	2
Subgroup performance (there are eight subgroups) in ELA and Mathematics	16 *
Nonacademic Indicators (either attendance or graduation rate)	1
95% participation rate in ELA and Mathematics (school wide)	2
95% participation rate for subgroups	16
TOTAL	37

* Subgroups are students with IEPs, students in LEP programs (including the 2-year monitor period), students in poverty (receiving free or reduced-price lunch), Hispanic students & students in White (non-Hispanic), Black, Asian, and Native American racial groups.

SAFE HARBOR PROVISION

The Safe Harbor Provision of NCLB is another way to determine if schools are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Safe Harbor provides an opportunity for schools or student subgroups to be recognized for growth that is significant, even though the progress made does not meet the current year's AMO. If a school, district, or any of the evaluated subgroups within the school or district fails to meet an AMO, Safe Harbor allows for further review of the assessment data before a final decision is made on the school or district's classification. Figure 1 outlines this calculation.

A combined Index Proficiency Score is calculated for the prior three years and is subtracted from 100 (the 2014 goal). This gives the gap between the goal and the Index Proficiency Score. Once calculated, 10% of the gap is added to the prior three years' Index Proficiency Score to arrive at the Safe Harbor target. If a school achieves this target in the current year, it will have met the requirement of the Safe Harbor Provision. For all school levels, meeting the Safe Harbor target is treated as an alternative way of demonstrating Adequate Yearly Progress.

Figure 1: **Example of Safe Harbor Target Calculation**

A school has a Mathematics Index Proficiency Score of 42 in the previous year test cycle.

100 – 42 = 58 (the gap)
10% of the gap is 5.8%
Safe harbor target becomes:
42 + 5.8 = 47.8

The Safe Harbor formula is also applied to attendance rates. The calculations for applying the Safe Harbor test to attendance rate data are the same as those applied to ELA and mathematics. If the school closes the gap between the previous year's attendance rate and 90% by 10%, then the school will have met the attendance rate target. A similar improvement formula is in use for the graduation rate. No safe harbor or other improvement formula is in use for test participation rates.

NON-ACADEMIC INDICATORS

There are two types of nonacademic accountability indicators. The first is *participation rate*. Schools and districts must test at least 95% of their enrolled students in ELA and mathematics. School and subgroup test participation rates are based on the grade levels actually tested each fall. As opposed to content area Index Proficiency Scores, participation rates are based on Testing Year rather than Teaching Year data. All subgroups that are evaluated for academic purposes must also have at least a 95% test participation rate. Participation rates are reported separately for English Language Arts and for Mathematics.

The other nonacademic indicator is the attendance rate at the elementary and middle school levels and the graduation rate at the high school level. Rhode Island's required attendance rate to meet AYP is 90%. Schools with attendance rates below 90% will have the opportunity for a Safe Harbor Review of this indicator. If it is found that schools have increased their attendance rate in accordance with the Safe Harbor Provision, then they are considered to have met this indicator.

Beginning this year, the graduation rates presented are calculated using a hybrid model, based on a four-year adjusted cohort or tracking formula and a five-year adjusted cohort model. The 4-year rate is based on the percentage of students who entered the ninth grade for the first time in 2006-07 and graduated within four years, with documented adjustments been made for students who transferred in or out. The 5-year rate is based on the percentage of students who entered the ninth grade for the first time in 2005-06 and graduated within five years, with documented adjustments been made for students who transferred in or out. The 4-year rate constitutes 60% of the hybrid rate and the 5-year rate constitutes the other 40%. For NCLB classification purposes, Rhode Island requires a graduation rate of 90% by 2014. A target of 76.7% has been set this year, with linear growth to 90% expected by 2014 (Table 8).

Although they are not used directly for determining AYP, graduation rates are also calculated for each of the NCLB subgroups under the new formula. Before any subgroup can use safe harbor provisions to meet any of the content area targets, that subgroup must first meet the graduation rate target, if applicable. So even though graduation rates of the subgroups are not required targets, they are a prerequisite for using Safe Harbor.

Table 8. **Graduation Rate Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)**

4-Year Rate		5-Year Rate		
Entered 9th Grade	**Graduated by**	**Entered 9th Grade**	**Graduated by**	**AMO**
2010-11	2014	2009-10	2014	90.0**
2009-10	2013	2008-09	2013	86.6**
2008-09	2012	2007-08	2012	83.3**
2007-08	2011	2006-07	2011	80.0**
2006-07	2010	2005-06	2010	76.7**
2005-06	2009	2004-05	2009	73.4
2004-05	2008	2003-04	2008	70.1
*	2007*	*	2007*	75.3
*	2006*	*	2006*	75.3
*	2005*	*	2005*	75.3
*	2004*	*	2004*	71.4
*	2003*	*	2003*	71.4
*	2002*	*	2002*	71.4

* Graduation rates for class of 2007 and earlier were based on the NCES cohort estimation formula.
** Graduation rates for 2010 and beyond are based on the hybrid 4-year/5-year cohort model.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS (AYP) AND SCHOOL CLASSIFICATIONS

For 2011 accountability purposes, a school or district is assigned an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP status) of "Made AYP" or "Did Not Make AYP," based on whether or not a school met all evaluated targets (up to the 37). Furthermore, schools are divided into one of five classifications:

1. Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Commended
2. Met AYP
3. Caution
4. Insufficient Progress
5. Delay

A school that has made AYP that also meets certain other criteria in both ELA and math may be labeled as Commended. A school that has made AYP this year but did not make AYP the previous year is considered to be in Delay. A school that has not made AYP is classified as Caution or Insufficient Progress based on the number and nature of the targets that were missed and on its prior AYP history. Details for these processes are outlined below.

COMMENDED SCHOOLS

In previous years, schools had been "Commended" in a review cycle separate from the primary school classification. Since 2005-06, "Commended" has been used as an integral part of the classification label. One condition for commendation is that a school must meet AYP (adequate yearly progress) by passing all evaluated targets. In addition, a school cannot be Commended if it is still regarded by the state as a school "In Need of Improvement" (as defined in the In Need of Improvement section below). This includes schools that have a "Delay" status, meaning that it met all of its targets for the current year but not for two consecutive years. Remaining schools may enter a commended status by meeting any one of three alternative sets of conditions. Schools meeting at least one of the following criteria are reported as "Met AYP and Commended:"

Method A: Schools are considered to be diverse if at least three NCLB disaggregation subgroups are large enough to be evaluated against NCLB targets. A diverse school may be commended if three or more subgroups have a gain in their index proficiency score which is at least two points higher than the statewide gain for all students. A school must meet this condition for both English Language Arts and mathematics.

Method B: A school may be commended if it has passed AYP for two consecutive years, has schoolwide index scores greater than or equal to the state average, and has increased its schoolwide index score by at least 1.5 points for two consecutive testing cycles. Thus, for the 2011 classification, schools would need to increase their index score by at least 1.5 points from 2007-08 to 2008-09 and from school year 2008-09 to 2009-10. These requirements must be achieved in both English Language Arts and mathematics.

Method C: Based on their computed index proficiency scores for ELA and mathematics, schools may be commended if they are in the top 10 percent of all schools for two consecutive years in both English Language Arts and mathematics. Elementary schools, middle schools and high schools are ranked independently.

An additional qualification applies to high schools. A high school cannot be commended if it is within a school district with an "approval withheld" status regarding the acceptability of its High School Diploma System, per the Commissioner's Review process.

INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS VS. CAUTION CLASSIFICATION

Schools are classified as not making AYP if they have missed any of the 37 NCLB targets. A school meeting AYP in the previous year and currently satisfying the AYP requirement for school-wide mathematics and school-wide ELA will receive the label **Caution** if not more than three AYP targets have been missed. A school cannot receive a Caution designation for two consecutive years. Also, a school cannot receive a "Caution" label if it was "In Need of Improvement" in the prior year. Otherwise the classification label will be "Insufficient Progress".

AYP STATUS AND IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT STATUS

Schools that have not made AYP for two years or more may be given the additional label of "In Need of Improvement" and be subject to NCLB/State accountability sanctions and interventions. "In Need of Improvement" applies if the school did not meet targets in the same content area (ELA or mathematics) or in one of the nonacademic indicators for two years or more.

It takes two consecutive years of not making AYP to be designated as a school "In Need of Improvement." It also takes two consecutive years of making AYP to be removed from that designation. For a school "In Need of Improvement," a subsequent year of making AYP puts it into a "Delay" status. This means that whatever sanctions applied in the previous year continue until a second consecutive year of making AYP is achieved.

For example, if a school fails to make AYP in ELA in 2010 and 2011, then the school will be subject to appropriate NCLB/State accountability sanctions. For a school that missed an ELA target in 2010, but then met ELA targets in 2011, but failed to meet the 2011 targets in mathematics, a new timeline begins and the school is not subject to the federal/state sanctions required for a school that makes insufficient progress for two consecutive years in the same content area (or nonacademic indicator). A school must meet all targets for two consecutive years in order to be removed from NCLB/State accountability sanction status.

SANCTION OR INTERVENTION CATEGORIES

Every school receives an accountability sanction status designation to further explain the consequences of its classification from a multiple-year perspective. Some of the sanction codes apply only to schools receiving federal Title I funds. When a school begins to receive Title I funds, its sanction or intervention category reflects its accountability history.

Table 9. **Sanction or Intervention Categories for Schools in Need of Improvement**

Public School Choice
Supplemental Educational Services
Corrective Action
Restructuring
In Need of Improvement (non-Title I school)

FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Rhode Island's school and district accountability system includes several flexibilities to ensure as much fairness as possible. These aspects of the accountability System serve to add reliability to the system. The flexibilities include:

- Error Bands
- Rounding Rules
- Cell Size
- Procedures for Very Small Schools
- Schools with Two or Three Educational Levels (elementary, middle, high)
- Student Exemptions

3-YEAR AND 1-YEAR REVIEW OF DATA

In order to provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate performance and growth, RIDE reserves the option to review multiple years of data.

Currently, analysis of NECAP scores is done on a single year basis (aggregating across grades) as the primary method of testing against AMO targets as well as to determine whether the minimum *N* criterion has been met for subgroups. It is anticipated that a multiple-year review may be introduced following multiple years of NECAP testing.

ERROR BANDS

Errors are inherent to any assessment system. Rhode Island's accountability process considers measurement errors associated with any testing program. To be sure that school or district Index Proficiency Scores, and the scores for each subgroup, are related to actual improvement over

time rather than random or measurement errors error bands are used for the Index Proficiency scores.

The error band for schools and for their subgroups are largely dependent on the standard deviation of student scores and the number of students tested. An upper limit of the mean index score of the school or subgroup is calculated using a 95% confidence interval. Standard error is calculated as follows:

$$Error = 1.96\left(\frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}}\right)$$ *where σ is the standard deviation of the index scores within a subgroup and n is the subgroup population.*

DATA ROUNDING RULES

For 2011 classifications, data rounding is used for participation rates and for attendance rates. For participation rates (ELA or Math), a rate of 94.5% or higher is allowed to meet the 95% target. For attendance rates, a rate of 89.5% or higher is allowed to meet the 90% target. Data rounding is not used for the graduation rate. Because academic AMO targets include a single decimal place, rounding has a minimal effect on meeting AMO goals or Safe Harbor targets. Rounding of the index score has not been used to determine Commended classifications.

CELL SIZE

Since determinations are made about school performance using subgroups of student populations, an effort is made to avoid making decisions based on a small number of students (*n)* that would make a school's classification statistically unreliable. For this purpose, decisions are made about subgroups only when there is a minimum of 45 students within the group assessed.

Table 10. **Minimum Cell Size Example: (Elementary School)**

	Number of Students Tested by Grade and Student Subgroup			
Subgroup	**Grade 3**	**Grade 4**	**Grade 5**	***TOTAL***
IEP	15 +	24 +	21 =	60
LEP	6 +	8 +	9 =	23
Black	7 +	6 +	11 =	24
Hispanic	16 +	14 +	18 =	48

NOTE: For LEP students, the tally to determine whether 45 or more students are represented is based on the number of students actively receiving LEP services at the time they were tested plus the count of LEP monitored students. LEP monitored students are former LEP students who were exited from LEP program services within the past two years.

In the example in Table 10, Index Scores would be calculated for the IEP (*n = 60)* and Hispanic (*n = 48)* subgroups. Index Scores would not be calculated for the LEP (*n = 23)* and the Black (*n = 24)* subgroups because this school does not have at least than 45 students across the three grades with test data. This school would also not be evaluated for AYP on these data elements.

PROCEDURES FOR VERY SMALL SCHOOLS

Schools that have fewer than 45 students enrolled across tested grades in the current testing year are defined as very small schools. Regardless of size, NCLB requires that all schools be classified. The process for classifying small schools allows for adjustment for the smaller population of students by creating a wider error band. This means that these schools will be classified generally in the same manner as all of the other schools; however, RIDE does not disaggregate any of the subgroup data because they have fewer than 45 students in the analysis.

SCHOOLS WITH TWO OR THREE EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

If a school's grade configuration includes more than one educational level (elementary, middle, high school), an Index Proficiency score is calculated by combining NECAP student performance results across all grades 2-7 and at grade 10. (October test scores at grade 3 are assigned to the school of the student in the prior year at grade 2 before Index Proficiency scores are calculated and grade 8 October test scores are assigned to grade 7, etc.) The total Index Proficiency score is then compared to the current AMO that applies to the highest grade in that school.

STUDENT EXEMPTIONS

LEP Students in the U.S. for Less Than One Year: These students are exempt from participating in the NECAP reading or writing exams if they have entered the U.S. after October 1st of the prior year. All students must participate in the mathematics exam. For the ELA exams, LEP students in the U.S. for less than one year are excluded from the calculation of the Index Proficiency scores and the test participation rates. For the mathematics exam, LEP students in the U.S. for less than one year are included in the participation rate, but excluded from the index proficiency score.

State-Approved Special Consideration: Typically, these students have medical, emotional or other issues that prevent them from taking the assessments that make up the Rhode Island State Assessment Program. The superintendent submits a letter outlining the student's special circumstances to the Director of the Office of Assessment and Accountability. Once approved,

that student is then removed from the enrollment roster of that school for purposes of accountability calculations.

Home-schooled Students: Home-schooled students may have an arrangement with the district to be tested. However, these students, and their scores, are removed from all accountability calculations for the school and the district.

Students who Enroll or Withdraw from a School During the Period of Testing: Such students are removed from enrollment rosters and their scores are not used in accountability calculations of the school.

It bears noting that some students with significant cognitive disabilities take the **Rhode Island Alternate Assessment** in place of the NECAP exams. Thus, this is not technically an exemption. These students are included in the accountability system calculations. Similarly, students who are tuitioned to "outplacement" educational services within Rhode Island are expected to take either the NECAP assessments or the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment. These outplacement students are assigned to the school district of financial responsibility when district-level accountability reports are produced.

CLASSIFICATION AND APPEALS PROCESS TIMELINE

The last opportunity for review of assessment data is the appeal process. A school or district entering sanctions will have 17 days to challenge the accuracy of the data that would lead to its classification. The timeline for 2011 classifications using NECAP assessments at grades 3-8 and 11 are found in Table 11 below:

Table 11. **Timeline for AYP Notification and Appeals**

Time Frame	Process or Product
October 2010	Testing Window
March 2011	Analysis of assessment data for accuracy and application of processing rules (e.g., disaggregations, October 1st enrollment checks, etc.).
March – April 2011	Appeal process occurs for all schools/districts.
April 2010 *	Final release of school and district classifications.

* This date is preliminary and may change without further notice.

APPEALS PROCESS

NCLB specifies an appeals period to allow Title I schools and districts to challenge the designation of being "In Need of Improvement." In Rhode Island, this is typically interpreted as a chance to request formally a review of the accuracy of student enrollment counts or the coding of student background or program characteristics, the accuracy of exemption codes or other similar issues. A request to give the Commissioner of Education discretion to review an appeal when a single target is missed by a very small margin in the context of other performance indicators was denied by the US Department of Education.

RIDE makes every effort to respond to appeals by schools that could potentially change their "In Need of Improvement" status or "Insufficient Progress" classification. Reviews for schools in a "Caution" or "Met AYP" classification are performed as resources permit. RIDE takes the position that the accuracy of student coding and enrollment counts should be guaranteed by districts at the beginning of the testing process rather than at the end.

Appeals must be submitted by the school district superintendents to:

Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner
Rhode Island Department of Education
Office of Instruction, Assessment and Accountability
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY AND CLASSIFICATION PROCESS

School districts are given an accountability classification that represents the district as a whole in addition to receiving accountability classifications for all individual schools within a district. All students who have received instruction in the district for at least one school year are included in an analysis of English Language Arts and mathematics performance. The review is done separately for all elementary schools merged into one data set, all middle schools merged and all high schools merged. Districts are also held to the same test participation rate, school attendance rate and graduation rate requirements that exist for schools. Students tuitioned to "outplacement" schools are included in the analysis of district performance. Districts are held to the same 37 potential targets that exist for schools at each level. Computation of index proficiency scores, calculations for safe harbor and other procedural methods parallel the methods described earlier for schools.

NCLB regulations require that adequate yearly progress (AYP) must be determined for each school district. Districts in their first year of not meeting AYP are designated as in a *Watch status*. A district is considered "In Need of Improvement" or in NCLB terminology "Identified for Improvement" if, for two or more consecutive years, it fails to make AYP in two of the three grade levels (elementary, middle, and high) or if, for two or more consecutive years, 40% or more of its schools do not meet AYP. Districts, like schools, are required to meet all targets for

two consecutive years before they can be removed from the *In Need of Improvement* list. In the first year of improvement, a district is considered to be in *Delay* status and is still regarded as a district "In Need of Improvement."

Similar to the handling of schools, there is now a content match rule for districts to move from a "Watch" to an "Identified for Improvement" status. To advance a district from "Watch" to "In Need of Improvement" the same content area must be missed target two years in a row at the educational level being reviewed (elementary, middle or high school).

District accountability classifications may sometimes appear to be inconsistent with school classifications. However, it often occurs that NCLB disaggregation subgroups (Hispanic, IEP, etc.) are not reviewed for individual schools because they have fewer than 45 students, but are reviewed at the district level when schools are combined for analysis. In addition, data for "outplacement" students are added into district analyses, but are not used for school analyses.

Table 12. **District Classification Rules**

District Performance	Classification
Following a year of not being in *Watch* or *In Need of Improvement*, the district does not meet AYP at 2 or 3 levels (elementary, middle, high) or at least 40% of schools in the district *Did Not Make AYP*.	*Watch status**
For 2 or more consecutive years, the district does not meet AYP at 2 or 3 levels (elem., mid., high) or for 2 or more consecutive years, at least 40% of schools in the district *Did Not Make AYP*.	*In Need of Improvement*
A district previously identified as *In Need of Improvement* makes AYP in the current year.	*Delay* status (also referred to as "Continuing" status), indicating *In Need of Improvement* status continues until a second consecutive year of improvement is demonstrated.
A district had *Watch* status last year but meets the district requirement for AYP in the current year.	*Met AYP* – No longer *In Need of Improvement*

* Note: A district may remain in Watch status until it either makes or misses targets in the same area of evaluation (ELA, math or attendance/graduation) for two consecutive years within each level (elementary, middle, high) or if 40% of schools in the district make or miss AYP for two consecutive years.

District performance classifications will be published with school performance classifications for 2011. Districts designated as being *In Need of Improvement* are subject to both NCLB and State accountability protocols as determined by the Commissioner of Education under the Article 31 legislation. Additional state remedies are described in RIDE accountability policies and protocols. The targets used to classify districts are the same that are used to classify schools.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CARDS

The 2011 Rhode Island Accountability Report Cards will be placed on the RIDE website (www.ride.ri.gov) as soon as they are available. The information in this *Technical Bulletin* explains how the calculations were done in order to create the Accountability Report Cards for schools and districts. It is important to note that the ELA and mathematics basic Assessment Reports prepared by the assessment contractor, Measured Progress, are not based on index scores and cannot be directly compared to the Accountability Report Cards. In addition, students not enrolled in a school for a full academic year are included in basic assessment reports, but are not included in accountability analyses or published accountability report cards. All Assessment Report Cards are now designed by the assessment contractor and were delivered to schools and districts in the basic delivery of assessment results in January 2011.