

**RHODE ISLAND
SCHOOL AND DISTRICT
ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

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RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

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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 had enacted Article 31. That legislation put into place a policy framework and accountability system that included all Rhode Island public schools. That initial system evaluated schools for the 2000-01 and 2001-02 school years before the introduction of the NCLB-based system in 2002-03. 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. The Board of Regents and the Commissioner expect that schools will improve performance and close gaps in performance between groups of students. The Regents' policy on Progressive Support and Intervention has evolved to support this expectation.

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. The final administration of the New Standards Reference Exam (NSRE) at grade 11 occurred in March 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.

This document is the updated version of the Technical Bulletin for classifying schools and districts based primarily on October 2009 NECAP performance.

THE INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE

Our early experience with the New Standards Reference Examinations in English Language Arts and Mathematics taught us 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 has been continued for use with the NECAP assessments.

Getting all students to meet the standard is difficult because it depends upon a number of factors relating to school change. These include resources, rigorous curriculum, up-to-date materials, expert instruction, and a supportive community, to name a few. Because the single most important factor in student achievement is the quality 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 2009-10 school year. It mirrors the process that was used in the 2008-09 school year.

INDEX SCORE CALCULATIONS

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. The reading, writing and mathematics assessments report student results under NECAP in four achievement levels (Proficient with Distinction, Proficient, Partially Proficient and Significantly Below Proficient). For school and district accountability analyses, these four categories were expanded to six categories as outlined in Table 1. For each student, points are assigned corresponding to each achievement level to create an Index Proficiency score.

Table 1. Rhode Island's Index Proficiency Scale

| Achievement Level – NECAP | Index Proficiency Score |
|---|-------------------------|
| Proficient with Distinction | 100 |
| Proficient | 100 |
| Partially Proficient | 75 |
| Significantly Below Proficient (<i>Upper Range</i>) | 50 |
| Significantly Below Proficient (<i>Lower Range</i>) | 25 |
| No Evidence of Achievement | 0 |

The lowest level of NECAP achievement is “no evidence of achievement”. The NECAP scale assigns a zero for students who are at the bottom of the scale score range (score ending in 00 such as a 300 or a 500.) Students with scores of 300, 400, etc. contribute to the 95% participation indicator, since the students were attempting to take the test. (The numerical value before the “00” refers to the grade level of the test.) Students who participate in Rhode Island's Alternate Assessment, also contribute to school and district accountability in a similar manner to NECAP. There are no scale scores derived on the Alternate Assessment. All students scoring in the Significantly Below Proficient range have an Index Proficiency Score of 50 points. The *ALL Kids* focus of state education policy and law requires all public school students to participate in the Rhode Island State Assessment Program.

Table 2 explains how students are determined to have a score in the upper or lower range of “significantly below proficient” on the NECAP. This influences the number of index proficiency score points assigned.

Table 2. Mid-Points for Scale Score Range Dividing Significantly Below Proficient

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

NOTE: Midpoints are not the same for each grade or content

* Writing was piloted in Grades 5 and 8 this year and thus no student scores were produced. As such, the English Language Arts (ELA) score is determined from the reading score.

** 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 “significantly below proficient.” A score of 2 or 3 defines the upper range of “significantly below proficient.”

The NECAP assessments yield overall reading and mathematics scores from which statewide performance (achievement) standards were set on the reading total, math total and writing total scores. The achievement level on each test corresponds to a certain number of points on the accountability index scale. For every school, the contribution of the Writing assessment (taken at 5th, 8th and 11th grade) to the overall school ELA index score for NECAP will always be weighted as 20 percent of the total ELA score. Writing was piloted at grades 5 and 8 this year so the ELA score is based solely on the reading score at those grades and at the schools which contains those grades.

For the 2009-10 classification of all schools, the following steps are taken to compute ELA and mathematics index proficiency scores using results from the October 2008 NECAP assessments. (The steps are done separately for ELA and Mathematics.)

Step 1: Assign each student score to the grade and school of the prior school year (2008-09).

Step 2: Eliminate students who were not continuously enrolled from October 1, 2008 to the end of the 2008-09 school year in the school to which the score was assigned.

Step 3: Assign an Index Proficiency score 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 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, take the school writing index score (separately calculated) and apply that always as 20 percent of the final ELA index score with reading contributing the other 80 percent.

To recap, the index score of a school for 2009-10 is computed from student index scores across all grades combined.

A very important concept in computing the accountability index scores for schools is that October test scores are assigned to the previous grade before computations are done. An example of this is that elementary schools receive scores from the first year of middle schools before the index computations are done.

In Table 3 we illustrate 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 3: 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.

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 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 Score was calculated, the schools were rank-ordered from high to low separately for each level of school (elementary, middle and high). 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.

This process was not repeated using the new NECAP data. All AMOs and Intermediate Goals remain as originally defined for interpreting school performance. Alternate simulation models using the preliminary elementary and middle school NECAP results showed diverse results that were not compelling improvements over the original AMO baseline and trajectory to the year 2014. Using guidance from our Technical Advisory Committee and in accordance with our desire to avoid changing processes of the accountability system without a compelling reason, AMO values adopted under NSRE were kept in place for the NECAP assessments. The grade 11 AMO trajectory has also been kept in place to maintain a position of high and meaningful standards.

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 (IGS)

Another requirement of NCLB specifies 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 us some flexibility within the NCLB legislation. The Intermediate Goals were established using the following method of calculation:

$$(100 - \text{Baseline}) \div 6 = X$$

$$\text{Baseline} + X = \text{Intermediate Goal 1}$$

$$\text{IG1} + X = \text{IG 2, etc...}$$

We 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 we believe that larger gains will be seen as schools become focused and their 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]

| Year | Elementary | | Middle | | High | |
|-----------------------------|------------|------|--------|------|------|------|
| | 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)

The full chart of annual targets contains what are called the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOS). The AMOs are the basis for making AYP determinations for accountability.

AMOS for certain years are the same as the most recent Intermediate Goal until 2011. For example, the AMOs in 2003 and 2004 were the same as in the baseline year of 2002. The application of Intermediate Goals and AMOs is consistent with the theory of change discussed earlier. We anticipate the largest gains will take place in the latter part of the twelve-year timeline. The earlier years recognize the need for giving schools and districts *In Need of Improvement* time to organize and implement the changes needed to support students as they move up from the lowest performance categories. 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]

| Year | Elementary | | Middle | | High | |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 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 <i>Baseline</i> | 76.1 | 61.7 | 68.0 | 46.1 | 62.6 | 44.8 |

* AMO targets for the 2009-10 classification of schools using October 2009 NECAP scores

The school classification labels used for all schools in 2009-10 are:

- Met AYP and Commended
- Met AYP

- Caution
- Insufficient Progress

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. Schools have to meet criteria in both ELA and math to be called commended. Before 2005-06, schools with the highest classification label were called “High Performing and Improving.”

COMMENDED SCHOOLS

Revised criteria for a school to receive the label of “Commended” were implemented for the 2007-08 classifications and remain unchanged for 2009-10. 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 Figure 9 on page 18 and not to be confused with prior labeling schema referenced in the preceding section). This includes schools that have a “delay” status, meaning 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 with demographic/program diversity are defined as schools where 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 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 and has increased its schoolwide index score by at least 1.5 points for two consecutive testing cycles. Thus, for the 2008-09 classification, schools would need to increase their index score by at least 1.5 points from 2006-07 to 2007-08 and from school year 2007-08 to 2008-09. These gain scores must be achieved in both English language arts and mathematics.

Method C: Based on their computed index score for ELA and mathematics, schools must be 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.

INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS VS. CAUTION CLASSIFICATION

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. If the number of targets missed exceeds three, the school's label will be **Insufficient Progress**.

Schools are classified as making "Insufficient Progress" if they have missed any of the 37 NCLB targets. However, in cases where a school met all targets in the prior year, the school may be given the label "Caution" if not more than three targets were missed (excluding the school-wide ELA and math targets). Otherwise the classification label will be "Insufficient Progress". 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.

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 2009-2010;
2. Comparison to the state AMOs for 2009-10 using the performance of disaggregated subgroups of students, but only 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 AMOs have been met for high school graduation rates or for elementary and middle school attendance rates.
4. Determination of whether at least 95% of the students school-wide participated in both the ELA and mathematics assessments. Starting with the 2005-06 classifications, this 95% participation requirement is also reviewed for all student subgroups with at least 45 students at the time of testing (October).

The school classification decisions are made using all 37 data elements 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 two-year monitor period after exit), students in poverty (receiving free or reduced-price lunch), Hispanic students and students in White (non-Hispanic), Black, Asian, and Native American racial categories.

AYP STATUS AND IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT STATUS

Schools are sometimes reported as having made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or not having made AYP. Schools with a classification label of “Insufficient Progress,” or “Caution” have not passed AYP. Schools which do not pass AYP for two or more years are given the additional status of *In Need of Improvement*.

Schools in a “Caution” classification are regarded as not having made AYP because NCLB regulations require that every target be met in order to pass AYP. Schools that have not met an AMO in the same content area (ELA or mathematics) for two years or more are subject to NCLB/PS&I sanctions and interventions. Schools that have not met the AMOs for two years in one of the nonacademic indicators are also subject to these sanctions and interventions.

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 using federal terminology. 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 2009 and 2010, then the school will be subject to appropriate NCLB/PS&I sanctions. For a school that missed an ELA target in 2009, but then met ELA targets in 2010, but failed to meet the 2010 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/PS&I sanction status.

SANCTION OR INTERVENTION CATEGORIES

Every school receives an accountability “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 8. General Sanction or Intervention Status Key

| | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | New School (first year of operation) |
| 2 | Watch (a school in a <i>Caution</i> or <i>Insufficient Progress</i> status for the first year) |
| 3 | In Need of Improvement, Choice (Title I school) |
| 4 | In Need of Improvement, Supplemental Services (Title I school) |
| 5 | In Need of Improvement, Corrective Action (Title I school) |
| 6 | In Need of Improvement, Delay, first year making AYP for a school “In Need of Improvement” in the prior year. |
| 7 | In Need of Improvement, PS&I, non-Title I school, two or more years of not meeting AYP in the same content area or nonacademic indicator to enter a 7 status. (Then, a parenthetical indicator notes number of years in this status.) |
| 8 | In Need of Improvement, Restructuring (Title I school) (A separate parenthetical indicator presents number of years in restructuring.) |
| T | Title I school |

NOTE: Parenthetical values are used with status codes 7 and 8 to indicate the number of consecutive years in that status.

* A school may receive multiple codes. For example, a T, 3, 4 school is a Title I school providing both Choice (parents may select another school to send their children to) and Supplemental Educational Services (tutors and/or other services are provided to students).

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.**

SAFE HARBOR PROVISION

The Safe Harbor Provision, part of NCLB, is another way to determine if schools are making adequate yearly progress. 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 us to further review the assessment data before a final decision is made on the school or district's classification. Figure 1 outlines this calculation.

For elementary and middle schools, the Index Proficiency score for the prior three years is subtracted from 100 (the 2014 goal) and this gives us the gap between the goal and the Index Proficiency score. For high schools, we have only two prior years of data available; nonetheless, these data are also subtracted from 100 to calculate the Safe Harbor gap. Once calculated, 10% of the gap is added to the prior year 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 alternate way of demonstrating adequate yearly progress.

Figure 1: Example of Safe Harbor Target Calculation

If a school has a Mathematics Index Proficiency Score of 42 in the previous test cycle, then:

$$100 - 42 = 58 \text{ (the gap)}$$

10% of the gap is 5.8%

Safe harbor target becomes:

$$42 + 5.8 = \mathbf{47.8}$$

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 current attendance rate and 90% by 10%, then the school will have met the attendance rate target. No safe harbor or other improvement formula is in use for the graduation rate or for test participation rates.

If a school or district fails the Safe Harbor Review, the last opportunity for review of assessment data is the appeal process as described in a later section. A school or district entering sanctions will have 17 days to challenge the accuracy of the data that would lead to its classification.

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

and all subgroups 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 second nonacademic indicator measures attendance at the elementary and middle school levels and 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 have met this indicator.

The graduation rates presented are based on a four year adjusted cohort or tracking formula, sometimes referred to as the NGA formula. Under this formula, the graduating class of 2009 has been tracked since it started ninth grade and documented adjustments have been made for transfers and additions from ninth grade to graduation. For NCLB classification purposes, Rhode Island requires a graduation rate of 90% by 2014. We have set a baseline of 73.4% this year and expect a linear growth to 90% by 2014 (Table 9).

Graduation rates are also calculated for each of the NCLB subgroups under our new formula. Before any subgroup can use safe harbor provisions to meet any of the 37 NCLB targets, that subgroup must first pass the graduation rate requirement, if applicable. So even though graduation rates of the subgroups are not required target, they are a prerequisite for using Safe Harbor.

Table 9. Graduation Rate AMOs

| Graduating Class | AMO |
|-------------------------|------------|
| 2014 | 90.0 |
| 2013 | 86.6 |
| 2012 | 83.3 |
| 2011 | 80.0 |
| 2010 | 76.7 |
| 2009 | 73.4 |
| 2008 | 70.1 |
| 2007 * | 75.3 |
| 2006 | 75.3 |
| 2005 | 75.3 |
| 2004 | 71.4 |
| 2003 | 71.4 |
| 2002 | 71.4 |

* Graduation rates for the class of 2007 and earlier were based on the NCES cohort estimation formula.

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 will be introduced following three or more years of NECAP testing.

ERROR BANDS

Errors are inherent to any assessment system. Rhode Island's Accountability System process considers measurement errors associated with any testing program. We want 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. To minimize the effects of error in our decision making, we use error bands for the Index Proficiency scores.

The error band for schools and for their subgroups is 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 was 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 2009 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 participation. For attendance rates, a rate of 89.5% or higher is allowed to meet the criterion of 90% attendance. 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 establish “commended” performance.

CELL SIZE

Since determinations are made about school performance using subgroups of student populations, we want 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)

| <i>Subgroup</i> | <i>Number of Students Tested by Grade And Student Subgroup</i> | | | |
|-----------------|--|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| | 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 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 more than 45 students across the three grades with test data. Because School A does not have at least 45 students in the LEP and Black subgroups, this school would not be evaluated 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 us to adjust 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, we do 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 for 2009-10 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 notion that some students with significant cognitive disabilities take the **Rhode Island Alternate Assessment** (RIAA) 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 tutored 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 timeline for 2009-10 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 2009 | Testing Window |
| March - April 2010 | Analysis of assessment data for accuracy and application of processing rules (e.g., disaggregations, October 1 st enrollment checks, etc.). |
| April 2010 | Appeal process occurs for all schools/districts. |
| May 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 and 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:

Mary Ann Snider, Chief
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 tutored to “outplacement” schools are included in the analysis of district performance. Districts are held to the same 37 potential targets that exist for schools. 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 consecutive years, it fails to pass AYP in two of the three grade levels (elementary, middle, and high) or if 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 “Identified for Improvement” we look for the same content area to have a 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 <i>Watch</i> or <i>In Need of Improvement</i> , the district does not meet AYP at 2 or 3 levels (elementary, middle, high) or at least 40% of schools in the district are classified as making <i>Insufficient Progress</i> . | <i>Watch status*</i> |
| For 2 or more years, the district does not meet AYP at 2 or 3 levels (elem., mid., high) or at least 40% of schools in the district are <i>In Need of Improvement</i> . | <i>In Need of Improvement</i> |
| A district previously identified as <i>In Need of Improvement</i> makes AYP in the current year. | Delay status (also referred to as “Continuing” status), indicating <i>In Need of Improvement</i> status continues until a second consecutive year of improvement is demonstrated. |
| A district had <i>watch</i> status last year but meets the district requirement for AYP in the current year. | Clear – No classification assigned |

* **NOTE:** A district may remain in watch status until it misses targets in the same area of evaluation (ELA, math or attendance/graduation) for two consecutive years within each level (elementary, middle, high) being evaluated.

District performance classifications will be published with school performance classifications for 2009-10. Districts designated as being *In Need of Improvement* are subject to both NCLB and Progressive Support and Intervention protocols as determined by the Commissioner of Education under the Article 31 legislation. Additional state remedies are described in the Progressive Support and Intervention policies. The data elements (targets) used to classify districts are the same data elements that are used to classify schools.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CARDS

The 2010 Rhode Island Accountability Report Cards will be placed on the RIDE website during August 2010 (www.ride.ri.gov). 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 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 2010.