



**RHODE ISLAND’S SCHOOL AND
DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

**Performance Classifications:
*An Explanation of the Process***

June 2010

“All students ready for success in college, careers, and life”

— Deborah A. Gist, Education Commissioner

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Rhode Island's Accountability System

In 1997, the Rhode Island General Assembly enacted Article 31. This legislation put into place a policy framework and accountability system that included all Rhode Island public schools and required them 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.

With the introduction of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), Rhode Island proposed its accountability system to meet NCLB requirements, which included: 1) testing students in grades 3 through 8 plus a high-school grade; 2) developing timelines to bring all students to proficiency by the year 2014; and 3) establishing a system to determine which schools and districts are failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Upon approval from the US Department of Education, Rhode Island's accountability system was first implemented during the 2002-03 school year to interpret students' performance on statewide assessments.

Standards: The New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)

In October 2005, Rhode Island, along with partner states New Hampshire and Vermont, introduced the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) for students in grades 3-8 to further comply with the requirements of NCLB. The NECAP high school assessments in reading, writing and mathematics were introduced in October 2007 and the following year, a statewide NECAP assessment of science was introduced at grades 4, 8 and 11 that continues to be administered each May. (Maine began to administer the NECAP tests in 2009.)

The NECAP assessments are all based entirely on standards that detail what students should know and be able to do at each grade level for English language arts, mathematics, and science. These standards, which are known as Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and Grade Span Expectations (GSEs), are posted on the RIDE Web site (<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/gle.aspx>).

Testing: The NECAP Assessments

The state assessment system in Rhode Island determines whether students have met the standards appropriate for their grade in school. The NECAP Assessments in English language arts and mathematics (developed by educators from Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine with the NECAP testing contractor, Measured Progress) are administered annually in October to students in grades 3 through 8 and 11. While reading and mathematics tests are administered in all tested grades, writing tests are administered only in grades 5, 8, and 11. The school-performance classifications—based on the results of these three tests—are released annually in spring.

School-Performance Classifications and the Index Proficiency Score

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 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

NECAP Achievement Level	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

NECAP scale scores range from X00 to X80, where “X” is the *grade level* of the assessed student. In other words, Grade 3 scale scores range from 300 – 380; Grade 4 from 400 – 480; and so on up to Grade 11, which ranges from 1100 – 1180. The lowest level of NECAP achievement is “No Evidence of Achievement,” which results in a zero (0) being assigned to those students who are at the bottom of the scale score range.

Students who participate in Rhode Island’s Alternate Assessment also contribute to school and district accountability in a similar manner to NECAP. While no scale scores are derived on the Alternate Assessment, Index Proficiency Scores are still assigned based on student results (e.g., all students scoring in the *Proficient* range would be assigned 100 points for accountability purposes).

Annual Measurable Objectives for Schools

School AYP classifications are based on whether each school has met its Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) or targets for the year. The AMOs for Rhode Island’s schools were established back in 2002 using the formula recommended in federal NCLB guidance to derive baseline Index Proficiency Scores for each school level in both English language arts and mathematics. These baseline scores are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. 2002 Baseline AMOs

	<u>English Language Arts</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
Elementary School	76.1	61.7
Middle School	68.0	46.1
High School	62.6	44.8

Roughly speaking, these baselines represented the 20th percentile in 2002 for each test at each school level. For example, the elementary-school English language arts (ELA) baseline of 76.1 means that 80 percent of the elementary school students in 2002 were enrolled in schools with a *higher* Index Proficiency Score and 20 percent were in schools with a score of 76.1 or lower.

From each baseline, RIDE, as required by NCLB, set five intermediate goals that will culminate in a score of 100 (e.g., 100-percent proficiency) by the year 2014. For example, the middle-school mathematics scores must improve by at least 9.0 points at each intermediate goal in order to reach 100 by the year 2014 (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Chart of Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) [Index Proficiency Scores]

Year	Elementary		Middle		High	
	<i>ELA</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>ELA</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>ELA</i>	<i>Math</i>
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-Performance Classifications

In Rhode Island’s Accountability System, schools are classified according to one of the following categories:

- Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Commended
- Met AYP
- Caution
- Insufficient Progress

Met AYP vs. Met AYP and Commended. Schools that have met all of their targets have made adequate yearly progress and are classified as “**Met AYP.**” Some schools that have Met AYP are honored as Regents’ *Commended* Schools. These are schools that have: 1) been consistently high performing in both ELA *and* mathematics for at least two years; 2) made significant progress in both ELA and mathematics; or 3) significantly closed achievement gaps that separate the various student groups.

Did not meet AYP. All schools that have missed targets have *not* met AYP. Schools that have missed three or fewer targets may be classified as in “**Caution**” status. A school cannot receive a *Caution* designation for two consecutive years nor can it receive a “Caution” label if it was “In Need of Improvement” in the prior year. All other schools that have missed targets are classified as having made “**Insufficient Progress.**” For schools that have not met AYP, the RIDE Report Cards and other reports on school classifications indicate how many of the 37 targets the school faced and how many targets it met.

Schools Identified for Improvement

Schools that have not met AYP for two consecutive years are “**Identified for Improvement.**” Schools remain in this status until they have met AYP for two consecutive years.

Consequences of Not Making AYP. Through a process known as “**Progressive Support and Intervention,**” RIDE works with districts in which schools have been *Identified for Improvement*. RIDE may also offer additional help to schools classified as making *insufficient progress* under the authority of the state law on “intervention and support for failing schools” [R.I.G.L. 16-7.1-5], which mandates that RIDE offer technical and policy support for at least three years to these schools. After three years of *insufficient progress*, progressive levels of control are exercised by RIDE, which can include school “**reconstitution.**” Reconstitution can involve restructuring of schools or even closing schools. Rhode Island state law does not establish a specific timetable or sequence of actions.

Schools that receive federal Title I funds, which are aimed at high-poverty schools, are also subject to the provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which *does* establish a specific timetable and sequence for state actions, as specified below:

1. **First year Identified for Improvement:** Students may transfer to other schools in the

- district (school choice).
2. ***Second year Identified for Improvement:*** School choice, plus students may receive free supplemental educational services.
 3. ***Third year Identified for Improvement:*** School choice, supplemental services, plus the school may be subject to various forms of corrective action.
 4. ***Fourth year Identified for Improvement:*** School choice, supplemental services, plus the school faces restructuring, which may mean replacing most of the staff, reopening the school as a charter school, or turning the school operations over to the state.

To be absolved from any of these four consequences, a school *must* meet AYP for two consecutive years.

The Accountability Status of Schools

Schools have a maximum of 37 targets to pass that are derived from the following steps:

1. Comparison of schoolwide ELA and mathematics Index Proficiency Scores with the state AMOs.
2. Comparison with the state AMOs using the performance of disaggregated groups of students, but only where the number of students reliably supports such an analysis (see “*Minimum Cell Sizes*” below for details).
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 percent of the students schoolwide participated in both the ELA and mathematics assessments.

The school classification decisions are made using all 37 targets as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. 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), and the following racial categories of students: Hispanic, White (non-Hispanic), Black, Asian, and Native American.

Nonacademic Accountability Indicators

Two other types of indicators determine a school’s classification, depending on whether it is an elementary, middle, or high school. The first, “**participation rate**,” is defined as the percent of students that completed or attempted the NECAP Math, Reading, and/or Writing assessments. The *participation-rate* target affects *all* schools and districts and requires that at least 95 percent of students at the school as a whole and for student groups must participate in the state assessments. The second target, which applies *only* to elementary and middle schools, requires an **attendance rate** of at least 90 percent at the school as a whole and for student groups. For high schools, the second target requires a four-year **graduation rate** of at least 73.4 percent for the school as a whole.¹ The target for high-school graduation rate rises steadily each year toward the ultimate goal of 90 percent or better in the year 2014. Table 5 presents the AMOs for 2009-2014.

Table 5. High-School Graduation-Rate Annual Targets: 2009-2014

Graduating Class	AMO
2014	90.0
2013	86.6
2012	83.3
2011	80.0
2010*	76.7
2009	73.4

**Note: 2010 classifications are based on the graduation rate for the Class of 2009*

District Classifications:

NCLB regulations require that 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 percent 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*.

Minimum Cell Sizes

¹ Subgroup graduation rates are not a required target; however, they are a prerequisite for using “Safe Harbor.” The *Safe Harbor Provision*, part of NCLB, is another way to determine if schools are making adequate yearly progress. It 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 RIDE to further review the assessment data before a final decision is made on the school or district’s classification.

Since determinations are made about school performance using groups of students, which can be very small at some schools, making decisions based on an insufficiently large number of students could make a school's classification statistically unreliable. To avoid this, classification decisions are made about groups *only* when there is a **minimum of 45 students** within the group assessed. The "45 or greater" criterion is determined based on the summation of all eligible test scores in the school during one cycle of testing.

RIDE Resources:

For additional information, see “*School and District Report Cards*” or “*NECAP Test Results*,” which are available on the RIDE Web site at: www.ride.ri.gov

For a detailed explanation of the Accountability/Classification System, see the “*Accountability Technical Bulletin*,” available at: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/accountability.aspx>

For an explanation of the newly calculated graduation rates, see “*Questions and Answers regarding the new Graduation-Rate Formula*,” available at: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/ride/GraduationRates.aspx>

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