



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

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

April 2011

***"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 an accountability system that included all Rhode Island public schools. It required them to align their education systems with the Rhode Island school reform agenda. The core of this agenda was the expectation that the Department of Education would set high standards and expect high achievement for all students.

The introduction of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) lead Rhode Island to revise its accountability system to meet new requirements. Rhode Island's current accountability system was first implemented during the 2002-03 school year. This system includes:

- 1) testing students in grades 3 through 8 plus one high school grade (now grade 11);
- 2) developing timelines to bring all students to proficiency by the year 2014; and
- 3) creating a system to determine which schools and districts are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

### **Common Core State Standards**

The Rhode Island Board of Regents adopted the Common Core State Standards in July 2010. Schools have begun the transition to curriculum and instruction that is fully aligned to the Common Core Standards. This process will should be completed by the 2013-2014 school year.

Rhode Island is part of the Partnership of the Assessment of Readiness in College and Careers (PARCC), along with 25 other states. The first PARCC assessments will happen during the 2014-2015 school year. In the meantime, Rhode Island continues to participate in the New England Common Assessment Program assessments.

### **Standards: New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and Grade Span Expectations (GSEs)**

Rhode Island created standards that detail what students should know and be able to do at each grade level for core subjects along with partner states New Hampshire and Vermont. These standards are known as the NECAP Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and Grade Span Expectations (GSEs). They are meant to capture the "big ideas" of reading, writing, mathematics and science. Districts use these guides for curriculum development and assessments. These standards serve as the foundation of the NECAP assessment administered to students in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.

### **Testing: The New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) Assessments**

The NECAP tests determine whether students have met their grade-level academic standards. These assessments were developed by educators from Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine with the NECAP testing contractor, Measured Progress. The following tests are currently administered every year:

- reading and mathematics – grades 3 through 8, plus grade 11 (October)
- writing – grades 5, 8, and 11 (October)
- science – grades 4, 8 and 11 (May)

It is important to understand that the October tests measure the content and skills students are expected to have learned through the *end of the previous grade level*.

Student's NECAP assessments results are reported in two ways, scaled scores and achievement levels. NECAP scaled scores range from X00 to X80, where "X" is the *grade level* of the assessed student. In other words, Grade 3 scaled scores range from 300 to 380; Grade 4 from 400 to 480; and so on up to Grade 11, ranging from 1100 to 1180. Scaled scores cannot be compared across grade levels, for example, a 340 on the Grade 3 NECAP Reading assessment is *not* equivalent to a 440 on the Grade 4 NECAP Reading assessment the following year.

Students' results in each subject are also reported as one of four achievement levels:

- Proficient with Distinction
- Proficient
- Partially Proficient, and
- Substantially Below Proficient.

There is a wide range of proficiency in each achievement level. In general, an achievement level of Proficient or Proficient with Distinction means that a student is prepared to begin working successfully on content or skills for the current grade. Partially Proficient or Substantially Below Proficient means that additional instruction may be needed on the previous grade content or skills for the student to successfully attain new content or skills at the current grade level.

### **NECAP Index Proficiency Scores**

For school accountability, these four categories are expanded to six, as outlined in Table 1. For each student in the school who took a NECAP test, points are assigned based on how the student scored. The result is called the Index Proficiency Score.

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

Some students with significant cognitive disabilities take the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA) instead of NECAP. RIAA results are also treated in a similar way for school accountability. While there are no scaled scores on the Alternate Assessment, Index Proficiency Scores are still created based on student results. For example, 100 points would be assigned for each student scoring in the *Proficient* range.

Once points have been assigned for all students tested in NECAP and RIAA, an average is calculated for the whole school for each subject – Reading, Writing and Mathematics. An English Language Arts (ELA) Index Proficiency Score is also calculated based 80% on Reading and 20% on Writing.

### **The Accountability Status of Schools**

School's Index Proficiency Scores are used as the basis for accountability. The school must meet certain targets for the school to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as defined by NCLB. There are targets in both English Language Arts and mathematics for the school as a whole. There are also targets for students in each of the eight student groups listed in the table below. In addition, the school must meet targets for the number of students tested in both subjects. Finally, elementary and middle schools have a target attendance rate and high schools have a target graduation rate. In all, there are 37 possible targets for schools to meet. However, most schools do not have all 37 targets because they do not have enough students in each student group for results to be reliable.

**Table 2. School Accountability Targets**

	English Test Score	English Test Participation	Math Test Score	Math Test Participation	Attendance/ Graduation	Total
All students	1	1	1	1	1	5
African-American	1	1	1	1	-	4
Asian	1	1	1	1	-	4
Hispanic	1	1	1	1	-	4
Native American	1	1	1	1	-	4
White	1	1	1	1	-	4
Students w/disabilities	1	1	1	1	-	4
English-language learners	1	1	1	1	-	4
Economically Disadvantaged	1	1	1	1	-	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37 Targets</b>

### **Annual Measurable Objectives for Schools**

In the federal No Child Left Behind Act the targets schools must meet are called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). Rhode Island set AMO's for schools using baseline scores from 2002 (shown in Table 3).

**Table 3. 2002 Baseline AMOs**

	<b><u>English Language Arts</u></b>	<b><u>Mathematics</u></b>
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 tests at each school level. For example, the elementary school mathematics baseline of 61.7 means that 20% of elementary school students in 2002 were in schools with a mathematics Index Proficiency Score of 61.7 or lower. (80% were in schools with a higher score.)

From each baseline, RIDE set five intermediate goals. These culminate in a score of 100 (i.e. 100% of students should be proficient) by the year 2014. For example, the elementary-school mathematics scores must improve by at least 4.0 points at each intermediate goal in order to reach 100 by the year 2014 (see Table 4 below). Except for the “all students” group, there must be at least 45 students enrolled in a student group before that group is checked against the target in English Language Arts or mathematics.

**Table 4. 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
<b>2010</b>	<b>84.1</b>	<b>74.5</b>	<b>78.6</b>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>63.2</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>84.1</b>	<b>74.5</b>	<b>78.6</b>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>63.2</b>
2008	84.1	74.5	78.6	64.1	75.0	63.2
<b>2007</b>	<b>80.1</b>	<b>68.1</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>55.1</b>	<b>68.8</b>	<b>54.0</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>80.1</b>	<b>68.1</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>55.1</b>	<b>68.8</b>	<b>54.0</b>
2005	80.1	68.1	73.3	55.1	68.8	54.0
<b>2004</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>62.6</b>	<b>44.8</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>62.6</b>	<b>44.8</b>
2001-02 <i>Baseline</i>	76.1	61.7	68.0	46.1	62.6	44.8

\* AMO targets for the 2010-11 classification of schools using October 2010 NECAP scores

### **Safe Harbor**

Some schools are able to make AYP despite having an index proficiency lower than the AMOs on the table above. This is because NCLB includes a provision known as *Safe Harbor*. This allows schools to be recognized for significant growth in index proficiency, even though the AMO may not have been met. To make Safe Harbor, a school must increase its Index Proficiency Score by at least ten percent of the difference between the prior three year's combined Index Proficiency Score and 100 (the AMO for all schools in 2014). Making Safe Harbor means that a school has met its target for accountability purposes.

### **Nonacademic Accountability Indicators**

All schools are responsible for making sure that as many students as possible take the state tests. The percent of students that attempt the NECAP or RIAA assessments is known as the *participation rate*. The target for the participation rate for both English Language Arts and mathematics is 95 percent for school as a whole and for each of the eight student subgroups in Table 2, so long as there at least 45 enrolled students in that subgroup.

Elementary and middle schools are also responsible for the student *attendance* rate. Schools must have at least a 90 percent attendance rate for all students.

High schools are responsible for their *graduation rate*. For the graduating class of 2010, the rate must be at least 76.7 percent. The target for the high-school graduation rate rises 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: 2011 classifications are based on the graduation rate for the Class of 2010*

As of 2011, Rhode Island uses a new hybrid graduation rate. This combines the rate for students who entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade 4 years earlier and the rate for students who entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade 5 years earlier. These 4-year and 5-year rates make up 60% and 40% of the hybrid rate, respectively. The hybrid rate recognizes when schools successfully help students graduate even if they need an extra year to do so. (Schools may also meet the target using the 4-year rate alone.) Schools with less than 30 students in the cohort are considered to have passed the graduation rate target.

### **The School-Performance Classifications**

Schools that meet all targets have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Based on their current and past AYP status, schools are classified into five categories:

1. **Met AYP and Commended** – The school met all of its targets and also met one of three other criteria:
  - a. The school was consistently high performing in both ELA and mathematics for at least two years;
  - b. The school made significant progress in both ELA and mathematics and was at least as high as the state average; or
  - c. The school made significant progress in achievement in both ELA and mathematics among several student subgroups.
2. **Met AYP** – the school met all of its targets.
3. **Delay** – The school met all of its targets this year but not in prior years. A school in Delay is still considered to be in need of improvement (see below).
4. **Caution** – The school missed at least one – but no more than three – of its targets. Also, none of the missed targets were for scores of the “All students” group. A school cannot be in Caution for two years in a row.
5. **Insufficient Progress** – The school that missed targets but does not meet all of the criteria to be in Caution.

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 In Need of Improvement**

Schools that do not meet their targets for two or more years in a row may also be labeled “***In Need of Improvement***.” Schools in Need of Improvement may face sanctions through NCLB and the state accountability system. For schools in need of improvement that receive federal Title I funds, which are aimed at higher-poverty schools, these sanctions get progressively severe each year a school misses its targets:

<b><i>Public School Choice:</i></b>	Some students may transfer to other schools in the district.
<b><i>Supplemental Educational Services:</i></b>	Public school choice plus some students may receive free tutoring.
<b><i>Corrective Action:</i></b>	In addition to public school choice and SES, this may mean replacing school staff, changing the curriculum, changing management of the school, appointing an expert to advise the school, or extending the school day or school year.
<b><i>Restructuring:</i></b>	In addition to public school choice, SES and corrective action, this may mean replacing most of the staff, reopening the school as a charter school, contracting with an outside group to manage the school, or turning the school operations over to the state.

A school can only exit In Need of Improvement status if it meets all of its targets two years in a row.

### **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 “***Watch***” status. A district is considered “***In Need of Improvement***” if, for two years in a row, 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; it is still seen as *In Need of Improvement*.

**RIDE Resources:**

For additional information about state Grade Span Expectations and Grade Level Expectations, please see [www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/gle.aspx](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/gle.aspx).

More information can be found about the Common Core standards at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/commoncore.aspx>.

Please see <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/PARCC.aspx> for more information about the PARCC assessments.

School and district report cards and additional information about the state accountability system are available on RIDE's Information Works website at <http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/>.

For an explanation of the newly calculated graduation rates, please visit <http://www.ride.ri.gov/ride/GraduationRates.aspx>

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