

Updated Recommendations  
to the  
State Board of Education  
for a  
State Accountability Index

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January 2009

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## **BACKGROUND**

The legislature requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop a statewide accountability system that will help improve academic performance among all students in the state. Part of that requirement is to “adopt objective, systematic criteria” to identify schools and districts for recognition and for receiving additional state support. To meet this requirement, the Board is developing an accountability index to sort schools and districts into different “tiers” based on multiple factors. The Board believes the index plays a key role in providing feedback about the status of education reform in schools and districts and supporting continuous improvement efforts. Various stakeholders and technical advisors have provided input and feedback about the index and how to identify “Priority” schools and districts in most need. This document provides recommendations for the index and how to identify Priority schools and districts.

A set of principles guided the development of the index. Specifically, the index should:

- Be transparent and simple to understand;
- Use existing data;
- Rely on multiple measures;
- Include assessment results from all grades (3-8, 10) and subjects tested statewide (reading, writing, mathematics, science);
- Incorporate concepts of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) system when appropriate;
- Be fair, reasonable, and consistent;
- Be valid and accurate;
- Focus at both the school and district levels;
- Apply to as many schools and districts as possible;
- Use familiar concepts when possible;
- Rely mainly on criterion-referenced measures instead of norm-referenced measures; and
- Provide multiple ways to reward success.

Several assumptions were made during the development of the index.

- Priority schools and districts should be those that are the most challenged in the state – they should meet a “common sense” test as those needing the most support.
- Priority schools and districts would be eligible to receive additional resources to make dramatic improvement in student outcomes. Criteria to be met to receive this support will be specified by SBE.
- Priority schools and districts would be required to participate in a state-supported initiative if offers of additional support are not accepted and substantial improvement does not occur after two years (see Appendix G for information about this issues).

The index is only one part of the overall accountability system. Mass Insight, a State Board contractor, has helped the Board design a system to support the schools and districts in most need, and this system will be aligned with the system of support OSPI offers. The system could include other elements as well. Since there is little or no information available on many other important outcomes, in-depth inspections of all or some schools and districts, like those used in other countries, could be used to provide a more complete analysis of their strengths and weaknesses and the presence or absence of best practices.

**ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX**

The proposed index is based on how schools and districts perform on a set of outcomes and indicators. Specifically, the recommended index uses a matrix of five outcomes and four indicators. The five outcomes are: the results of state assessments in four subjects (reading, writing, mathematics, science) and the “extended” graduation rate (for high schools and districts). These five outcomes are measured using four indicators: (1) achievement of students who are not from low-income families, (2) achievement of students from low-income families, (3) achievement of all students when compared to “peers,” i.e., achievement compared to schools and districts with similar student characteristics (the percentage of students who have a disability, are learning English, come from low-income families, and are mobile), and (4) the improvement in the achievement of all students from the previous year. This results in 20 measures, forming the matrix in Table 1.

**Table 1: Matrix of Accountability Measures**

	OUTCOMES				
INDICATORS	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Ext. Grad. Rate
Achievement of non-low income					
Achievement of low income					
Achievement vs. peers					
Improvement					

Each cell of the matrix is rated on a 7-point scale (1-7) using a set of fixed benchmarks. These benchmarks reflect the performance in each cell, with 7 being the best outcome. The 7-point scale gives sufficient “spread” in the results. Each of the four subjects is rated using the same set of benchmarks across the entire school/district (i.e., all subjects have the same set of benchmarks and the assessment results are the aggregate totals for all the tested grades). **The index is the simple average of all 20 ratings.** The index ranges from 1.0 to 7.0 and the higher the index, the better the level of performance of the school/district.

Table 2 shows the four indicators, the five outcomes, and the benchmarks that produce the various ratings. Achieving a high rating is a challenge, especially in content areas where performance has been low (i.e., math and science). The Learning Index is used to measure the assessment outcome for two indicators: *achievement compared to peers* and *improvement*. This Index (not to be confused with the accountability index) takes into consideration the percentage of students performing at the five different WASL levels, not just those meeting standard. The Learning Index ranges from 0 to 4, with 4.00 the highest score (similar to a grade point average). This index is explained in detail in Appendix A.

The proposed accountability index does not include AYP results. Feedback from all stakeholders revealed a lack of confidence in using the current AYP results for accountability purposes. Instead, the index will be used to *generate* AYP results because it has a number of advantages. The index is *more valid* than the current federal system because it is based on the performance of all students in more subjects, is more differentiated than a “Yes/No” system, does not count students multiple times, and addresses several unintended consequences created by the current system. The index is *more inclusive* because it uses a smaller minimum number for reporting (10 students across the entire school/district), includes the results of all

students (not just those who are continuously enrolled), includes both writing and science (this helps prevent a narrowing of the curriculum), and uses the Learning Index to measure performance across the range of assessment results (this reduces the focus on students who perform close to the proficiency cut point at the expense of students who are farther above and below that level). The index is *less volatile* over time because assessment results are combined across all grades in a school/district rather than using results for individual grades. Finally, the index is *more transparent* because it does not include a margin of error, the benchmarks are the same over time and among the different subjects for both schools and districts, there are fewer subgroups and rules, and schools and districts have the same minimum number for reporting results.

**Table 2: Benchmarks and Ratings for Outcomes and Indicators**

	READING	WRITING	MATH	SCIENCE	EXT. GRAD. RATE <sup>1</sup>
<b>ACHIEVEMENT (NON-LOW INCOME)</b>	<u>% MET STANDARD</u> <u>RATING</u>				<u>RATE</u> <u>RATING</u>
	90.1 - 100% ..... 7				> 95 ..... 7
	80.1 - 90% ..... 6				90.1 - 95% ..... 6
<b>ACHIEVEMENT (LOW INCOME)</b>	70.1 - 80% ..... 5				85.1 - 90% ..... 5
	60.1 - 70% ..... 4				80.1 - 85% ..... 4
	50.1 - 60% ..... 3				75.1 - 80% ..... 3
	40 - 50% ..... 2				70 - 75% ..... 2
	< 40% ..... 1				< 70% ..... 1
<b>ACHIEVEMENT VS. PEERS<sup>2</sup></b>	<u>DIFFERENCE IN LEARNING INDEX</u> <u>RATING</u>				<u>DIFFERENCE IN RATE</u> <u>RATING</u>
	> .20 ..... 7				> 12 ..... 7
	.151 to .20 ..... 6				6.1 to 12 ..... 6
	.051 to .15 ..... 5				3.1 to 6 ..... 5
	-.05 to .05 ..... 4				-3 to 3 ..... 4
	-.051 to -.15 ..... 3				-3.1 to -6 ..... 3
	-.151 to -.20 ..... 2				-6.1 to -12 ..... 2
	< -.20 ..... 1				< -12 ..... 1
<b>IMPROVEMENT<sup>3</sup></b>	<u>CHANGE IN LEARNING INDEX</u> <u>RATING</u>				<u>CHANGE IN RATE</u> <u>RATING</u>
	> .15 ..... 7				> 6 ..... 7
	.101 to .15 ..... 6				4.1 to 6 ..... 6
	.051 to .10 ..... 5				2.1 to 4 ..... 5
	-.05 to .05 ..... 4				-2 to 2 ..... 4
	-.051 to -.10 ..... 3				-2.1 to -4 ..... 3
	-.101 to -.15 ..... 2				-4.1 to -6 ..... 2
	< -.15 ..... 1				< -6 ..... 1

Note: Assessment-related results are the combined results of both the WASL and WAAS from all grades.

<sup>1</sup> This outcome only applies to schools and districts that are authorized to graduate students.

<sup>2</sup> This indicator adjusts the outcomes using statistical methods (multiple regression) to control for four student characteristics beyond a school's control: the percentage of low-income, ELL, special education, and mobile students. (Mobile students are those who are not continuously enrolled from October 1 through the testing period.) Scores are the difference between the actual level and the predicted level. Scores above 0 are "beating the odds" and negative scores are below the predicted level. Separate analyses are conducted for schools for each of the four assessments for each type of school (elementary, middle, high). District calculations also control for the level of current expenditures.

<sup>3</sup> Measured in terms of the change from the previous year.

Tier assignments are determined based on the index score. Schools and districts would initially fall into five tiers based on their accountability index score, with an in-depth analysis of the data and conditions of those in the “struggling” tier to determine if they merit being placed in a 6<sup>th</sup> Priority tier and be eligible to receive more intensive support. The 6-tier system provides sufficient differentiation among schools and districts to guide decisions about recognition and those needing further support. Table 3 shows the ranges for the 6-tiers and their descriptive names. Table 3 also shows the distribution of schools using the criteria shown in Table 2 and data from 2007. A total of 2,011 schools had a reportable index score (the index for schools with fewer than 10 students assessed across all tested grades is not reported). More detailed results are reported in Appendix A.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 3: Tier Ranges and 2007 Results** (N=2,011)

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Index Range</b>	<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>Percent of Schools</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percent of Students</b>	<b>Average Enrollment</b>
Exemplary	5.50 – 7.00	81	4.0%	28,650	2.9%	354
Very Good	5.00 – 5.49	131	6.5%	64,500	6.4%	492
Good	4.00 – 4.99	591	29.4%	314,700	31.3%	532
Acceptable	2.50 – 3.99	980	48.7%	523,000	52.0%	534
Struggling	1.00 – 2.49	228	11.3%	74,000	7.4%	325
Priority (eligible for Innovation Zone) <sup>1</sup>	1.00 – 2.49	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

<sup>1</sup> Schools in the Priority tier would be determined after an in-depth analysis of quantitative and qualitative information of the schools in the Struggling tier.

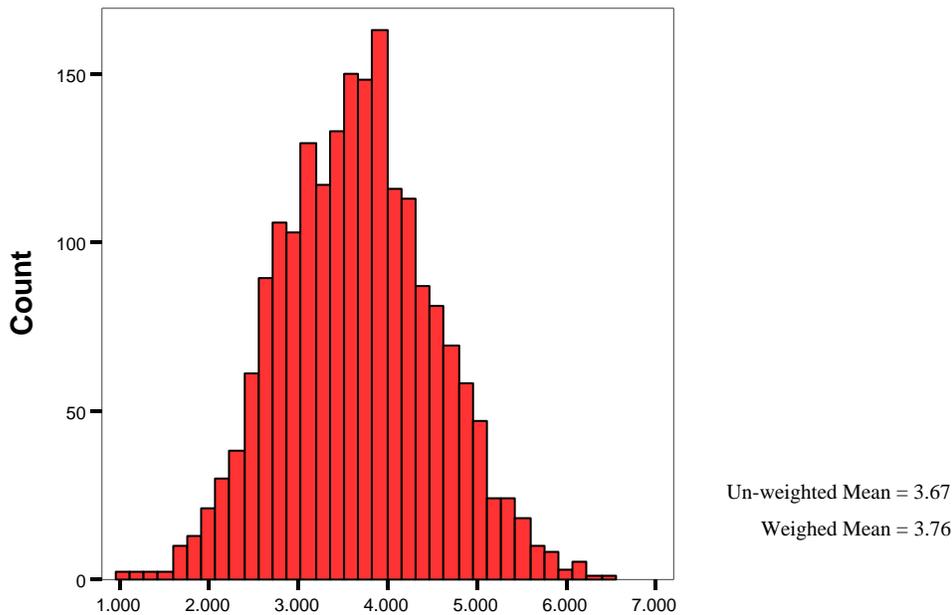
Note: Schools averaged 3.71, with 4.00 being the mid-point on a 7-point scale.

In 2007, nearly half the schools were in the Acceptable tier. The 228 schools in the Struggling tier enrolled 74,000 students, or roughly 1 in every 14 students statewide. Of the schools in this tier, 98 (43%) were alternative schools or served other special populations, with enrollment of 12,400 students. The 130 “regular” schools in the Struggling tier enrolled 61,600 students. Of the schools in the Struggling tier in 2007, 143 (63%) did not make AYP, and 62 were in “school improvement.

There were 1,984 schools that had an index in both 2006 and 2007. *Over a 2-year period*, only 2% (42 schools) had an average index of 5.5 or greater (Exemplary tier), while 7.5% (149 schools) had an average index below 2.50 (Struggling tier). Of the 149 schools in the lowest tier, 89 were regular schools that enrolled approximately 39,000 students (roughly 4% of statewide enrollment). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the 2-year index average for the schools that had reportable data in both years. There was little difference in the distribution of schools based on their grades served (i.e., elementary, middle, high). Alternative schools were more evenly distributed across the tiers, although they were more likely to fall into the Struggling tier than any other tier.

<sup>1</sup> Results presented in this document do not include grade 10 students who met standard in August. These students will have their scores counted when calculating the index in the future.

**Figure 1: Distribution of Schools by Index Score (Average of 2006 and 2007)**



**Index 2-year average, all outcomes (2006 & 2007)**

The index for schools and districts and their tier can be made available in a “report card” for use by policymakers and the public, with a set of “stars” indicating the rating so the overall results can be seen at a glance.

Tables 4 and 5 give examples of how the individual ratings generate the index/tier assignment for two actual schools using results available from 2007. The results would be made public as part of the OSPI Report Card (the format of the presentation must still be determined). Results presented in this type of “dashboard” give policymakers, educators, and the public a quick snapshot of where a school is strong and weak and its overall rating. It also provides transparency about how the index number is determined.

- The *high school* described in Table 4 is located in a medium-sized suburb of a large city with fewer low-income students than the typical high school in the state. Its WASL scores had been about the state average in most subjects but both reading and math scores dropped dramatically from 2006 levels. Like many high schools, it has low math and science scores. It also has lower scores than high schools serving similar students, and the performance of its low income students was below that of non-low income students in three subjects. Its graduation rate is fairly high, even when compared to its peers, the rate improved substantially from the previous year, and surprisingly, low-income students had a higher rate than the non-low income students rate. Its index of 3.40 puts it close to the middle of the Acceptable tier, which is probably worse than educators and community members expected.
- The *elementary school* described in Table 5 is located in a medium-sized city with above-average levels of low-income, ELL, and mobile students. Its WASL scores are well above the state average in several grades but below the state average in one grade. It had sharp declines from very high WASL scores the previous year, resulting in low improvement

ratings in 3 subjects. Its reading and writing scores are still quite high and its scores are very high compared to schools serving similar students. Low-income students had lower rating than non-low income students in three subjects. The graduation rate does not apply. Its index of 4.44 is above the middle of the index scale and is in the Good tier.

**Table 4: “Actual” High School, 2007**

Indicator	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Grad Rate	Average
Non-low inc. ach.	5	6	3	1	5	4.00
Low-inc. ach.	4	4	1	1	7	3.40
Ach. vs. peers	2	2	2	2	6	2.80
Improvement	1	4	1	4	7	3.40
Average	3.00	4.00	1.75	2.00	6.25	3.40
Non-low inc. ach.	*****	*****	***	*	*****	
Low-inc. ach.	****	****	*	*	*****	
Ach. vs. peers	**	**	**	**	*****	
Improvement	*	****	*	****	*****	

**Table 5: “Actual” Elementary School, 2007**

Indicator	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Grad Rate	Average
Non-low inc. ach.	7	7	5	1		5.00
Low-inc. ach.	5	4	4	1		3.50
Ach. vs. peers	7	7	7	5		6.50
Improvement	1	4	3	3		2.75
Average	5.00	5.50	4.75	2.50		4.44
Non-low inc. ach.	*****	*****	*****	*		
Low-inc. ach.	*****	****	****	*		
Ach. vs. peers	*****	*****	*****	*****		
Improvement	*	****	***	***		

District Accountability

The proposed index applies to districts using the same rules, indicators, and outcomes that are used for school accountability. The results will be based on districtwide data for all grades rather than being disaggregated by grade bands (elementary, middle, high). District results are more likely to be made public when using the combined results for all grades—only five extremely small districts, with a combined total of 79 students, had fewer than 10 students in their tested grades in 2007. Financial data, which is available only at the district level on a consistent basis, is used the district-level “peer” analysis to control for the amount of total operating expenditures per pupil. The same type of deeper analyses would occur for districts that have an index number in the lowest tier in order to determine if they merit receiving extra support, just like the process used for schools. This closer look would also include examining the percentage of schools and number of students that are found in the lowest tier and the consistency of problems in a particular set of grade bands or subjects.

Other types of tables and charts can illustrate the results. Table 6 and Figure 2 show examples of how all the results for a *hypothetical* district (or school) can be shown across multiple years to show trends over time.

**Table 6: Showing Accountability Results Over Time (All Grades, Hypothetical District)**

<i>Indicator/Outcome</i>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Non-low inc. ach.</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>3.80</b>
Reading	****	*****	*****	*****
Writing	****	****	****	*****
Math	**	**	**	****
Science	*	*	*	*
Ext. grad. rate	NA	***	*****	*****
<b>Low-income ach.</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>2.40</b>
Reading	***	*****	*****	*****
Writing	***	***	*****	*****
Math	*	*	*	**
Science	*	*	*	*
Ext. grad. rate	NA	*	**	*
<b>Ach. vs. peers</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>
Reading	****	****	****	****
Writing	****	****	****	****
Math	****	****	****	****
Science	****	****	****	****
Ext. grad. rate	NA	****	****	****
<b>Improvement</b>	<b>5.67</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>4.60</b>	<b>3.60</b>
Reading	*****	*****	****	****
Writing	NA	*****	*****	****
Math	*****	*****	****	****
Science	*****	*****	****	****
Ext. grad. rate	NA	NA	*****	**
<b>INDEX</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>3.45</b>

**Figure 2: Average Ratings, 2004-2007 (Hypothetical District)**

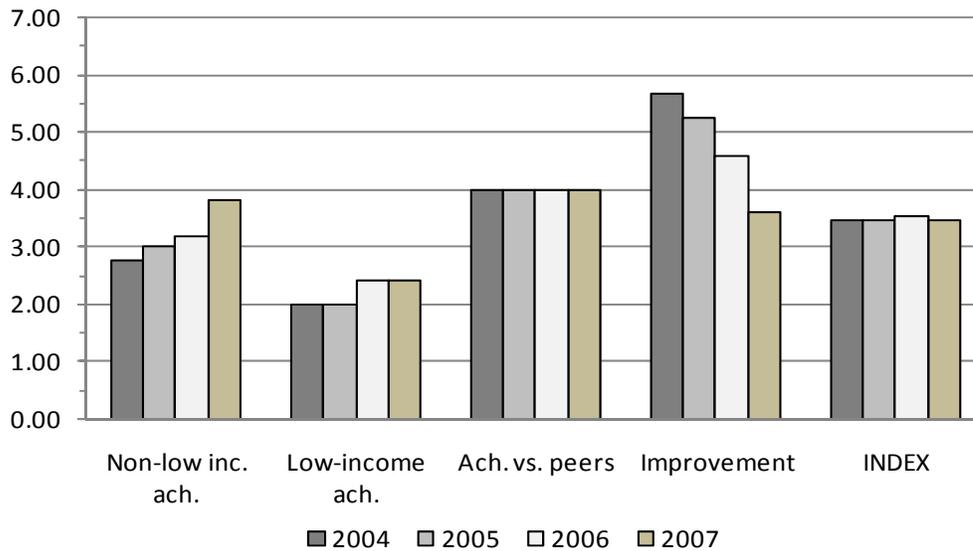
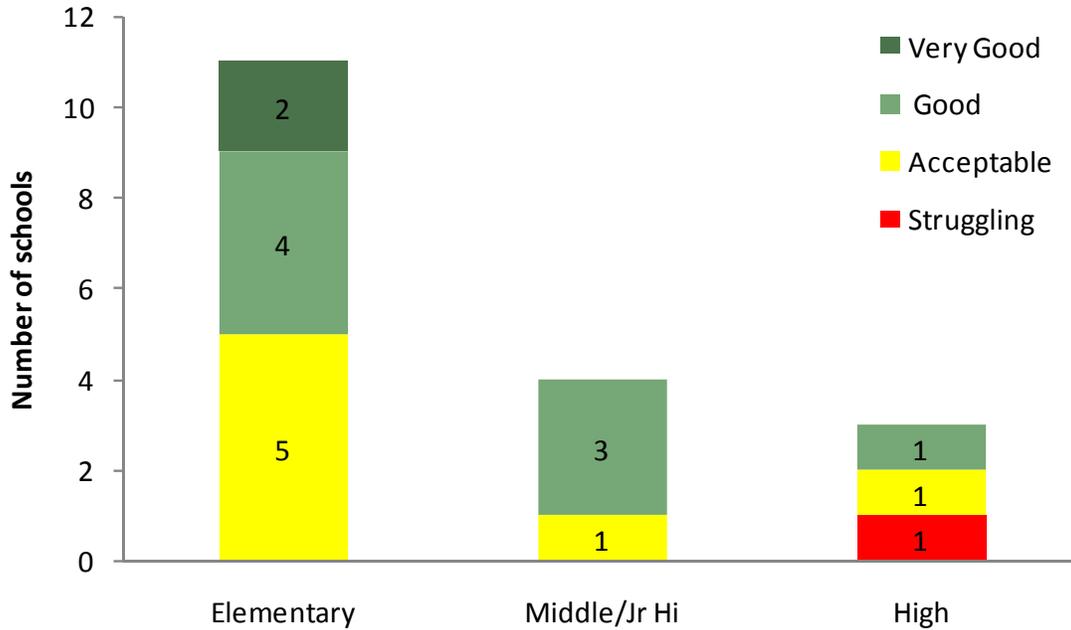
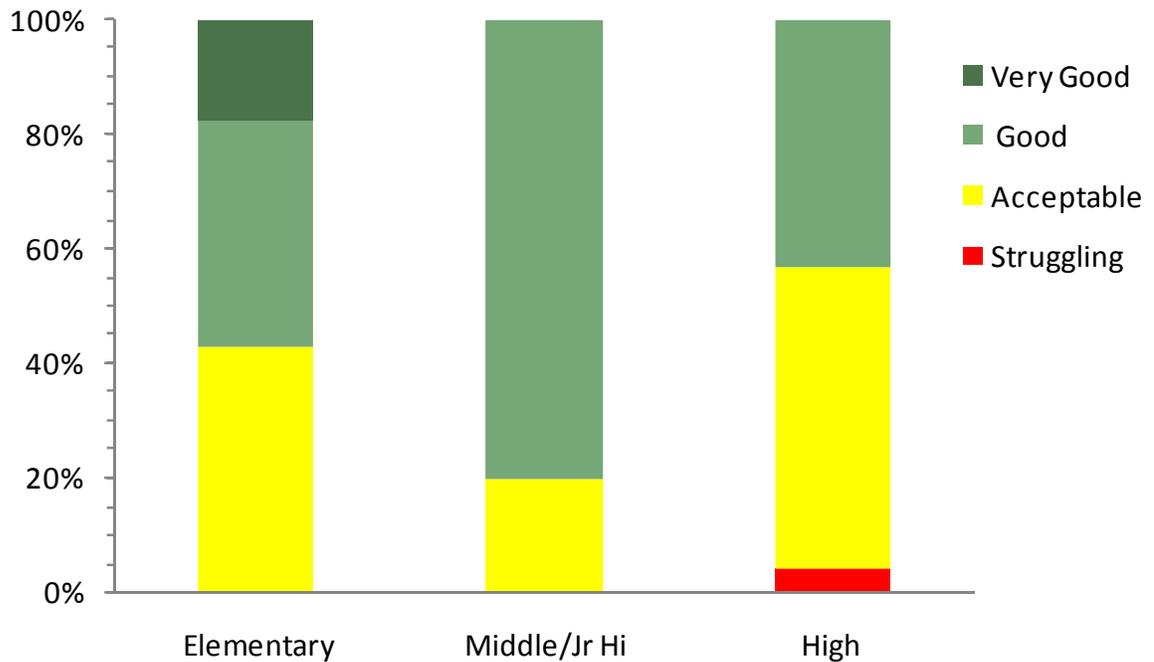


Figure 3 shows the distribution of the *number of schools* by tier for an *actual* district in 2007, while Figure 4 shows the *percentage of students* enrolled at those schools. This district had an index of 4.30, which is in the Good tier.

**Figure 3: Distribution of *Schools* by Grade Level and Tier in “Actual” District (2007)**



**Figure 4: Distribution of *Students* by Grade Level and School Tiers in “Actual” District**



Note: One alternative high school, with an index in the Struggling tier, has relatively few students.

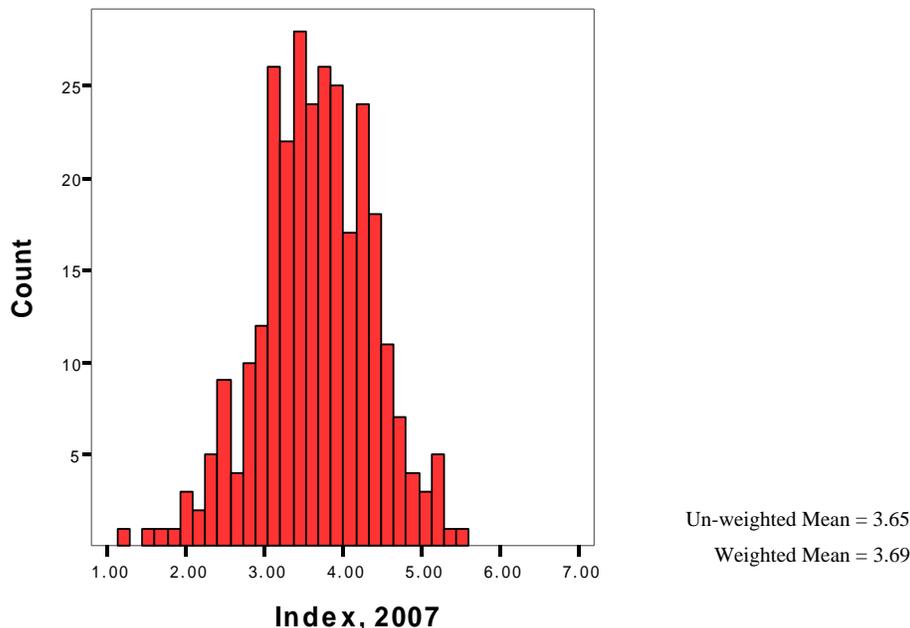
Table 7 shows the district results using the same criteria and rating system used for schools. Districts are more tightly clustered in the distribution than schools, with fewer districts in the top and bottom tiers (see Figure 5).<sup>2</sup> More than 60% fell in the Acceptable tier. The 17 districts in the Struggling tier in 2007 tended to be small (fewer than 750 students). Seven of these 17 districts made AYP in 2007 and only three were in district improvement. This is partly due to the low AYP targets in 2007, a large margin of error for small districts, and fewer student groups meeting the minimum reporting number. Although larger districts were not usually in the Struggling tier, some had many of their schools in the Struggling Tier. For example, 13 districts that were not in the Struggling tier had at least two regular schools with a 2-year index average below 2.50, and three districts had at least five regular schools with a 2-year index average below 2.50.

**Table 7: Tier Ranges and 2007 Results for Districts (N=291)**

Tier	Index Range	# of Districts	% of Districts	# of Students <sup>1</sup>	Average Enrollment <sup>1</sup>
Exemplary	5.50 – 7.00	1	.3%	360	360
Very Good	5.00 – 5.49	9	3.1%	31,500	3,500
Good	4.00 – 4.99	87	29.9%	278,500	3,200
Acceptable	2.50 – 3.99	177	60.8%	692,500	3,910
Struggling	1.00 – 2.49	17	5.8%	17,500	1,030
Priority (eligible for Innovation Zone)	1.00 – 2.99	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

<sup>1</sup> Approximate numbers

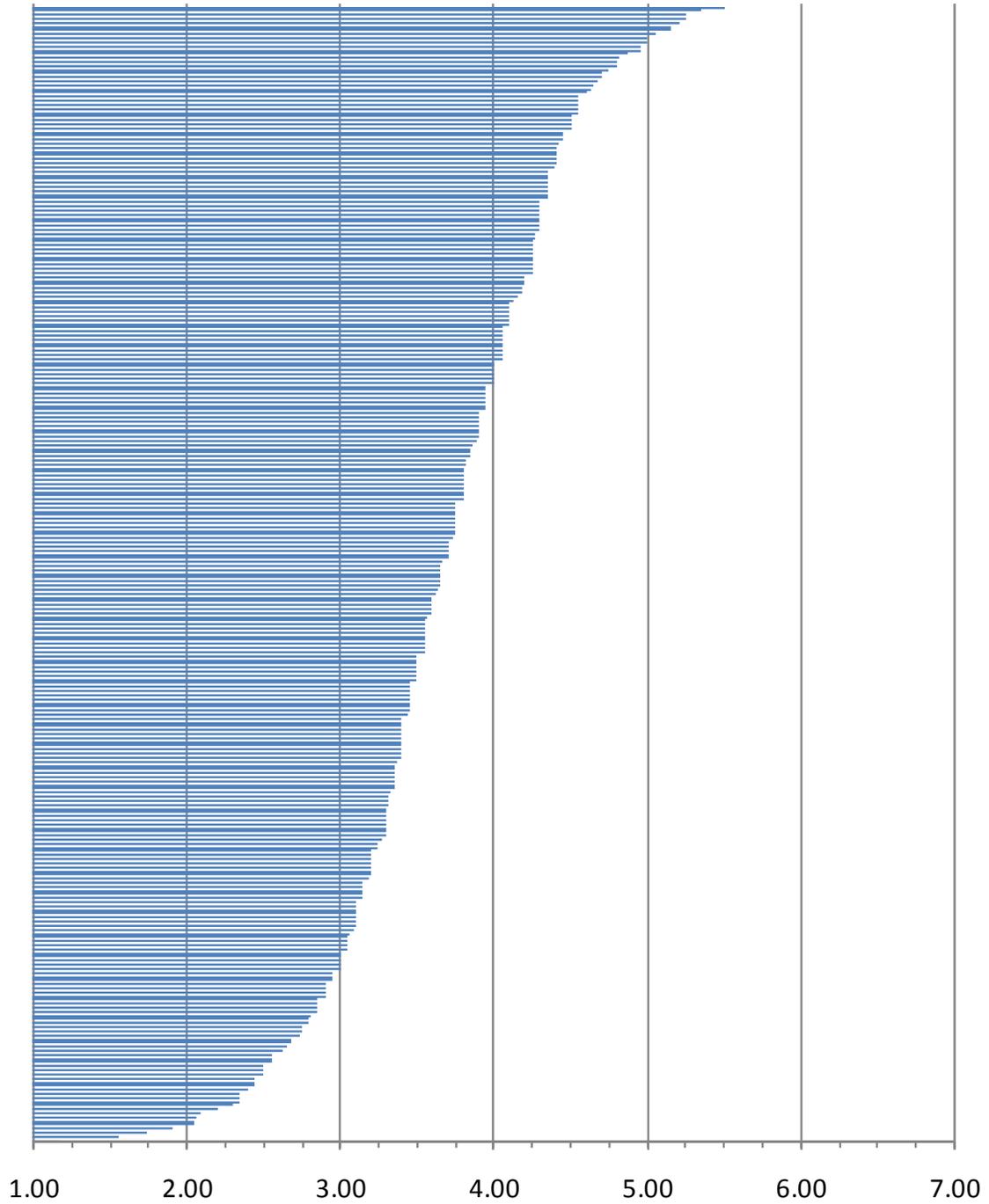
**Figure 5: Distribution of Districts by Index Score**



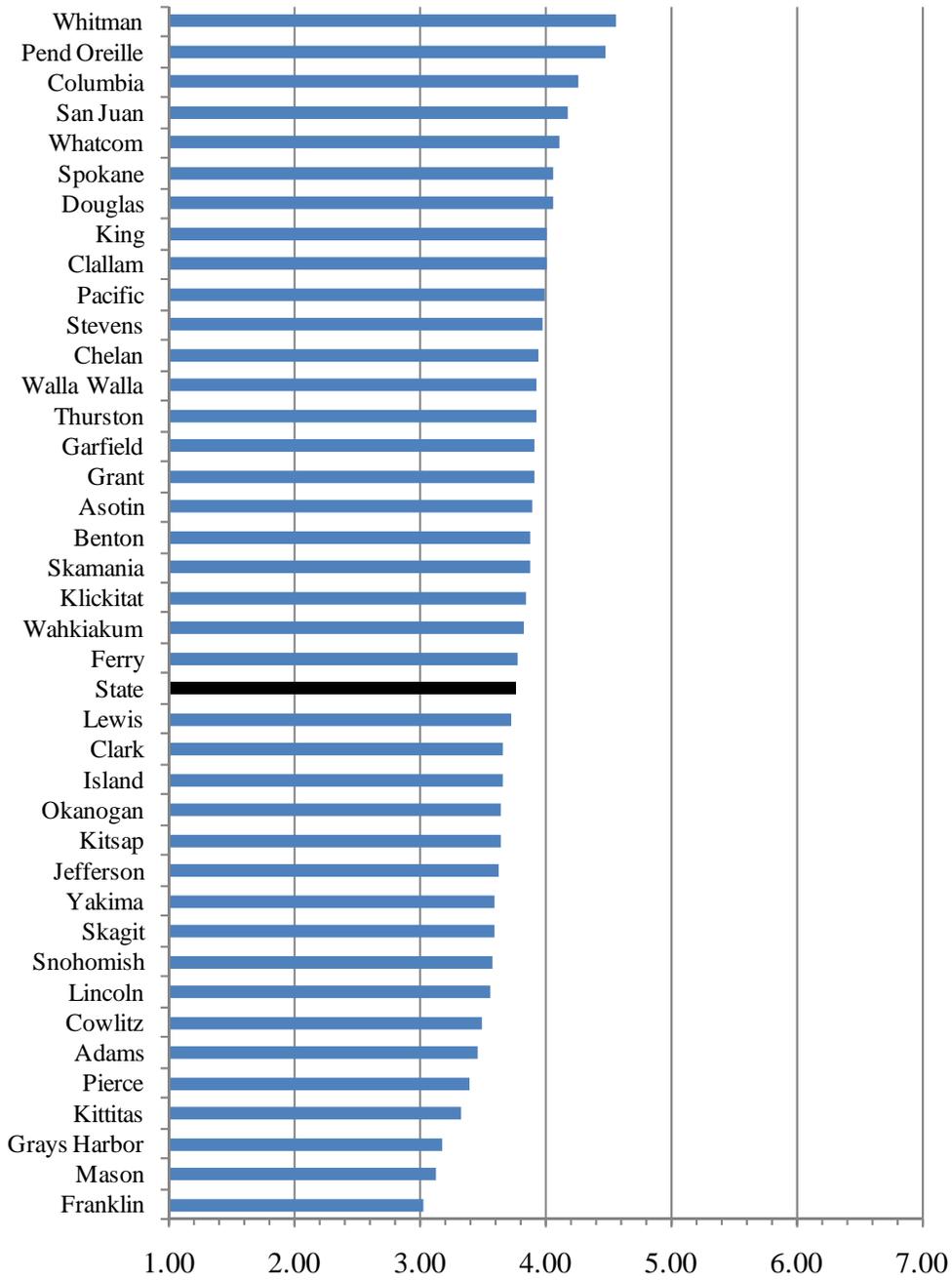
<sup>2</sup> District results do not include correctional institutions, tribal schools, contract schools, and schools serving more than 50% of students outside the district boundary. The aggregation rules used in these calculations are the same as those used by OSPI when calculating district results. Results would not be published when the combined number of students assessed is less than 10.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of all the district index results in 2007. Figure 7 shows the 2-year average index for each county.

**Figure 6: Distribution of Index Score by District, 2007**



**Figure 7: Distribution of Index Results by County**



Average Index, 2006 & 2007

Note: The 2-year average is weighted by district enrollment, so larger districts count more than smaller districts. This gives a more accurate representation of the county results.

## HANDLING SPECIAL CASES

The accountability system needs to be flexible enough to accommodate some special situations. These include holding alternative schools accountable in an appropriate manner, possibly excluding some ELL results from the index calculations, and not counting the improvement cells when achievement is at very high levels.

### Alternative Schools

Many types of alternative schools exist in the state. More than half the “schools” with this designation serve at-risk students in grades 9-12. Some believe these schools have taken on more challenging students, which allows more traditional schools to generate better outcomes with their remaining students. On the other hand, some schools offer special programs for students who are not at-risk and who must meet rigorous academic requirements for admission. Some are considered “alternative” because they do not use a normal school approach. A growing number of schools serve students through distance or digital learning and offer instruction electronically, usually via the Internet. Parent Partnership Programs are a type of “school” where parents are the primary instructor, the district provides instructional materials, and a certificated teacher acts as a consultant. Alternative schools exist at the elementary and middle school levels as well, and some programs are offered through independent contractors. Some schools with this designation target special student populations (e.g., special education, gifted, ELL), and some are held on college campuses or at night.

The wide variation in the focus, structure, and clientele of alternative programs across the state poses unique accountability challenges. Their results are included in district results, but school-level outcomes may be very high or low because of the type of students served. As a result, no “peer” indicator is computed for these schools. Most of these schools are relatively small and their total 2007 enrollment was less than 4% of enrollment statewide, but many of them serve student populations facing significant challenges. Consequently, alternative schools may need to be held accountable through more than just an index score.

Two options should be considered for holding alternative schools accountable. First, these schools could receive an index score using the calculations used for all schools. Since many alternative schools will likely have a very low index because they serve at-risk youth, they will be over-represented in the Struggling tier. Schools in this tier are examined more closely. OSPI would determine if an alternative school was following best practices and showing progress and therefore not be placed in the Priority tier (see the procedures in the next section).<sup>3</sup> The role, status, and available resources of alternative programs within the district are important factors to be examined during this process.

A second approach is to have the alternative schools that serve highly mobile and at-risk students (including those in correctional facilities) volunteer to be held accountable using other outcomes over an extended period of time (e.g., 3 years). This approach is used in California. For example, a school could choose to be evaluated by the number of credits earned, attendance rates, and gains on pre-post tests given during the year. This system is

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<sup>3</sup> In August 2008, BERC Group completed an evaluation of alternative schools in Washington state that serve high-risk youth. The report identified best practices used in these schools (see [http://www.k12.wa.us/DistrictImprovement/pubdocs/OSPIALtEdFinalReport2008\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/DistrictImprovement/pubdocs/OSPIALtEdFinalReport2008_FINAL.pdf)).

very complex, but it has been approved for federal accountability purposes and is viewed as being a more valid system for these types of schools.<sup>4</sup> OSPI could use concepts in this approach in its analysis of alternative schools that fall in the Struggling tier.

### Option Related to ELL Results

Results for ELL students are currently included in AYP based on federal requirements. Their results are not included during their first year of enrollment in a US school, but their results are included beginning in the second year. OSPI has requested that ELL results not be included until an ELL student has been enrolled in a U.S. public school for three years or until an ELL student achieves an intermediate level of English proficiency on the WLPT, whichever comes first.<sup>5</sup> This request is based on research that shows it takes many years for an ELL student to acquire “academic” proficiency in English, the state assessments are given entirely in English, no translated versions are administered, and the students must be able to read and write English in order to understand and respond to the test items. Moreover, testing these students in English violates widely-adopted testing standards and ethics because of threats to validity and mistreatment of human subjects. However, the U.S. Education Department has denied OSPI’s request to change the way ELL students are included in accountability calculations.

Nevertheless, computations for the proposed state accountability system could exclude the results for ELL students who had not achieved intermediate English proficiency (Level 3 composite) on the WLPT or for three years in a U.S. public school, whichever comes first, whenever a test requires reading and writing in only English. Although research has shown it takes longer than three years to acquire proficiency in English in an *academic* setting, this time period reflects OSPI’s position in its response to the federal regulations, and it provides motivation to help ELL students acquire English language skills. WLPT results would also need to be made public on the OSPI Report Card, which is not current OSPI practice. This would provide more accountability for progress among ELL students.

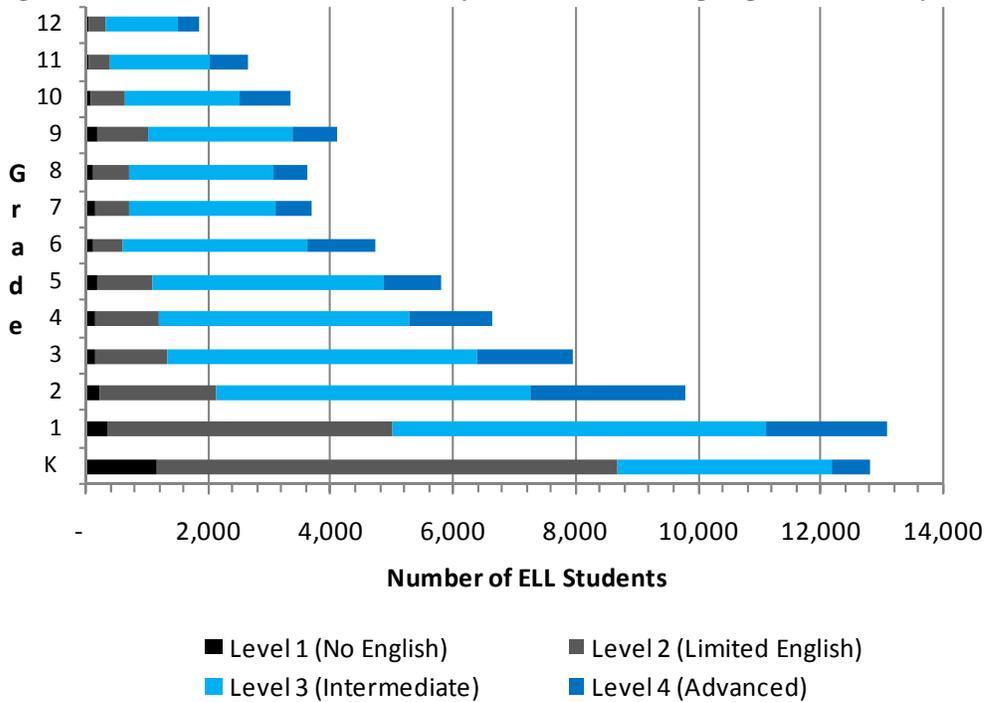
This policy would still include the results of a very large percentage of ELL students. About 70% of all ELL students enter school in kindergarten, and they will have attended school for three years before taking the state assessment for the first time in grade 3. Of the ELL students who were enrolled in grades assessed by the WASL/WAAS (grades 3-8 and 10), more than 81% had reached the intermediate level of the WLPT in 2008 and would have their scores included in the accountability calculations. Figure 8 shows these trends in 2008. While very few ELL students would have their results excluded, this policy would increase the fairness and validity of the accountability results. Sensitivity analysis found that using this policy created little change in the accountability index of a large district with many ELL students.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/am/> for information on California’s Alternative School Accountability Model (ASAM).

<sup>5</sup> All ELLs must have a *placement* test score to determine *initial* eligibility in the state program. All ELLs must take an *annual* language proficiency test (WLPT-II) to determine *continued* eligibility. The composite score from the annual test, which reflects proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, would determine if a student’s WASL/WAAS results are included in accountability calculations that year. Per federal requirements, ELL students are not required to take the reading test in their first year of enrollment in a U.S. public school, but they are required to take the math test, regardless of how long they have been attending a U.S. public school, even though all the math WASL test items are word problems given only in English.

**Figure 8: WLPT Results in 2008, by Grade and Language Proficiency Level**



Improvement by High Performers

Schools and districts that perform at very high levels are not able to improve much more. To avoid “penalizing” these schools and districts for a lack of improvement, the ratings for this indicator could be excluded from the index calculations under certain conditions. Without this policy, schools and districts with nearly all of their students achieving Level 4 on an assessment and graduating nearly all their students would not be able to achieve a rating above 4. Specifically, a school or district could request that the improvement indicator not be used to compute the accountability index when a Learning Index reaches 3.85 out of 4.00 and remains at or above that level for two consecutive years. (A school or district needs to improve by more than .15 to receive a rating of 7, which is impossible when their Learning Index is at or greater than 3.85.) The first year the Index falls above 3.85, the school/district would get a rating based on their improvement. If the Index stays at or above 3.85, the maximum rating is not possible, so the indicator would not be calculated. Of the schools and districts with reportable data (at least 10 students assessed), two schools reached this level on the Learning Index in 2006 (one in both reading and writing and the other in writing), no district reached this level in 2006, and no school or district reached this level in any subject in 2007.

The same policy applies to the extended graduation rate outcome. A school or district could request the extended graduation rate results not be used when computing the accountability index when the rate reaches or exceeds 94% and remains at that level for two consecutive years (the graduation rate must improve by more than 6 percentage points to earn a rating of 7). Of the schools with graduation data, 11% had a rate that was at least 94% in two consecutive years.

## IDENTIFYING PRIORITY SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS (LOWEST TIER)

Each year, the process for identifying Priority schools and districts will begin when OSPI computes the index in mid-August using the most recent data and posts preliminary results on the Report Card to meet federal NCLB deadlines. Given the relatively large number of schools that may fall into the Struggling tier,<sup>6</sup> the schools must be screened to eliminate those that clearly should not fall into the Priority tier. This will reduce the number of schools and districts that require a deeper analysis. When OSPI and SBE staff are confident the index has been calculated correctly, OSPI staff will review the index results for each school and district that falls in the Struggling tier, and then sort them into two categories:

- (1) Schools/districts that will *remain in the struggling tier* are those that have not been in this tier in the past two years or have obvious data problems that affected their results (e.g., errors in reporting the number of graduates, missing data for ELL, special education, and low income students that can affect the results of the “peers”).
- (2) The remaining schools/districts are placed in a *possible Priority tier* category pending further analysis.

OSPI staff will conduct a deeper analysis using available data for the schools and districts placed in the *possible Priority tier* category (pending additional information for high schools and districts using August results). This may require contacting the district and/or local ESD to get more information. A comprehensive list of quantitative and qualitative data was developed that could be used to help determine which schools in the Struggling tier will fall into the “Priority schools” tier (see Appendix B). Given the comprehensive nature of the list and the limited capacity to analyze all the data for every school and district in the Struggling tier, the list was shortened to include the most important factors to analyze. The data that will be reviewed at this exploratory phase fall into four general areas:

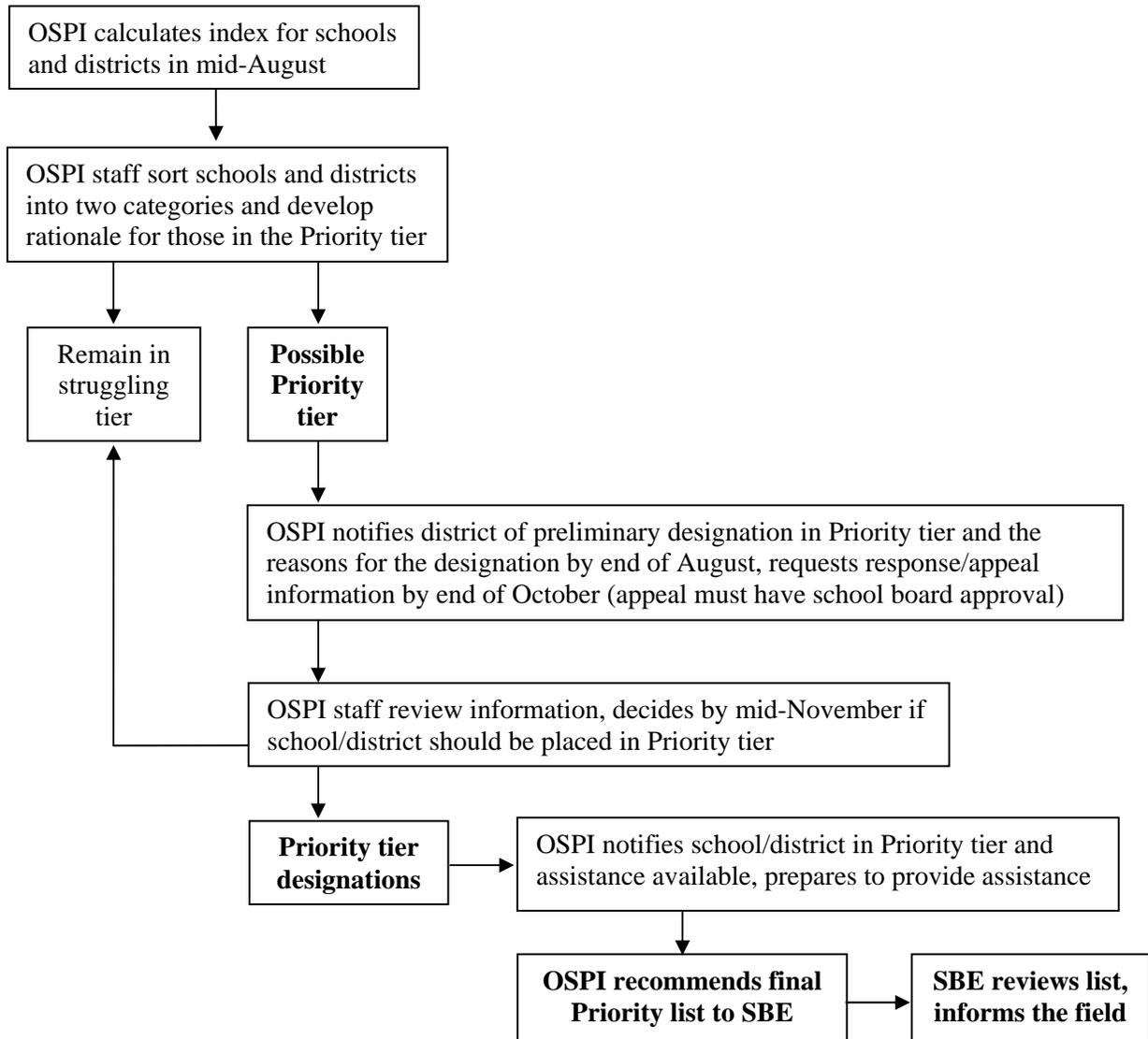
- **Contextual Data:**
  - Type of school
  - Changes in student population
  - Programs served by the school
  - Level of student mobility
- **Assessment Results (WASL/WAAS/WLPT)**
  - Trends over multiple years for each subject area
  - Subgroup trends
  - Results for students who have been enrolled for at least two years
- **AYP Results:**
  - Distance from the annual goal
  - Type of cells not making AYP
  - Percentage of cells not making AYP
- **Other Data:**
  - Graduation and dropout rates for subgroups
  - Student/teacher ratio
  - Teacher education and experience levels
  - Funding from local levies/bonds and outside sources
  - Recent changes in leadership (key central office staff and principals) and teachers
  - Problems with data that generate index (e.g., reporting errors related to graduates)

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<sup>6</sup> The number will still be far fewer than those not making AYP or identified for “improvement” under NCLB.

Based on this review, the schools and districts will be sorted again into the same two categories—those that remain in the struggling tier and those in the *possible Priority tier*. By the end of August, districts and schools placed in the possible Priority tier are notified of the possible designation and the reasons why this designation is possible. If required by federal law, this initial list will be made public. During September and October, the district/school is given a chance to avoid the Priority designation by providing more information (e.g., what explains the low index results, other favorable results, feeder school information, results of district assessments, personnel changes, type of interventions made to date) and any plans being made for the future. Any appeal to OSPI needs local school board approval. After receiving the August assessment results, OSPI will review all the information, and by mid-November, it recommends to SBE the schools and districts that should be placed in the Priority tier. The Board will review the list, receive comments, finalize the list, and inform the priority schools and districts about how they can respond to the designation. Figure 9 provides a flow chart of this process.

**Figure 9: Process for Identifying Priority Schools and Districts**



Schools and districts that are placed in the Priority tier would be offered additional state support, which would be tailored to meet their specific needs. Appendix C and G provide information about the current OSPI system of support and concepts for assistance to those in the Priority tier.

### **INTEGRATING THE SYSTEMS**

Federal law requires states to have a single accountability system. Many states combine their state accountability system with the federal NCLB system. The State Board of Education will work with OSPI in the coming months to prepare a unified accountability plan for the U.S. Education Department that will recommend using the proposed state accountability system in place of the current federal system. A new administration may provide more flexibility to states that design alternative systems. The proposed system has many desirable features that could make it a viable alternative to the current rules used to measure AYP. A new method for determining AYP and what constitutes being “in improvement” still must be determined, and the consequences of not making AYP could remain the same or be different.

The assessment and participation results will continue to be disaggregated for all student subgroups and be made public, as required by federal law. These disaggregated data will be used in the process of determining which schools and districts are in need of improvement and what type and level of support should be provided by the state. (Appendix C provides an overview of the current assistance system being used by OSPI to help schools and districts that are in “improvement” status.) When approved, the state will clarify what happens when schools and districts fall into the various AYP categories and state tiers.

### **RECOGNITION**

Two guiding principles apply to recognition system – it should provide multiple ways to reward success and rely mainly on criterion-referenced measures. The proposed recognition system is consistent with these principles and is based on a “theory of change” that people are motivated more by success than by blame or guilt. Recognition should occur when schools and districts reach challenging yet attainable targets using measures in the accountability matrix.

SBE should consider at least three options: provide recognition in each of the 30 cells of the matrix, or in each of the 20 “inner” cells of the matrix, or in the 10 “average” cells. The advisors recommend providing recognition in all 30 cells. The recommended minimum rating is 5.50 for all the 20 “inner” cells and 5.25 for the “averaged” cells (see Table 8). Any cell with a 2-year average of 6.0 or above receives recognition “with honors.” The ratings is calculated every year, and recognition is given when the two-year average rating meets the minimum requirement. This ensures recognition is given only for sustained exemplary performance.

**Table 8: Recommended Minimum Requirements for Recognition**

Indicator	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Ext. Grad. Rate	Average
Non-low inc. ach.	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25
Low-inc. ach.	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25
Ach. vs. peers	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25
Improvement	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25
<b>Average</b>	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25

Figure 10 shows how many of the 2,011 schools would have received recognition if the proposed system was in place in 2007 and all 30 cells were able to receive recognition. The largest number of schools would have received recognition in just one or two of the 30 areas, and 348 schools (17%) would not have received any recognition. At the other extreme, 242 schools (12%) would have received recognition in 10 or more areas, and one school would have received recognition in 21 of the 30 cells of the matrix. Of the 149 schools that had a 2-year index average of less than 2.50 (the Struggling tier), 71% would not have received any recognition in any of the 30 cells, 22% would have received recognition in one area, and 7% would have received recognition in two or three areas (most often in writing improvement).

**Figure 10: Number of Schools with Recognition, by Number of Recognitions (2007)**

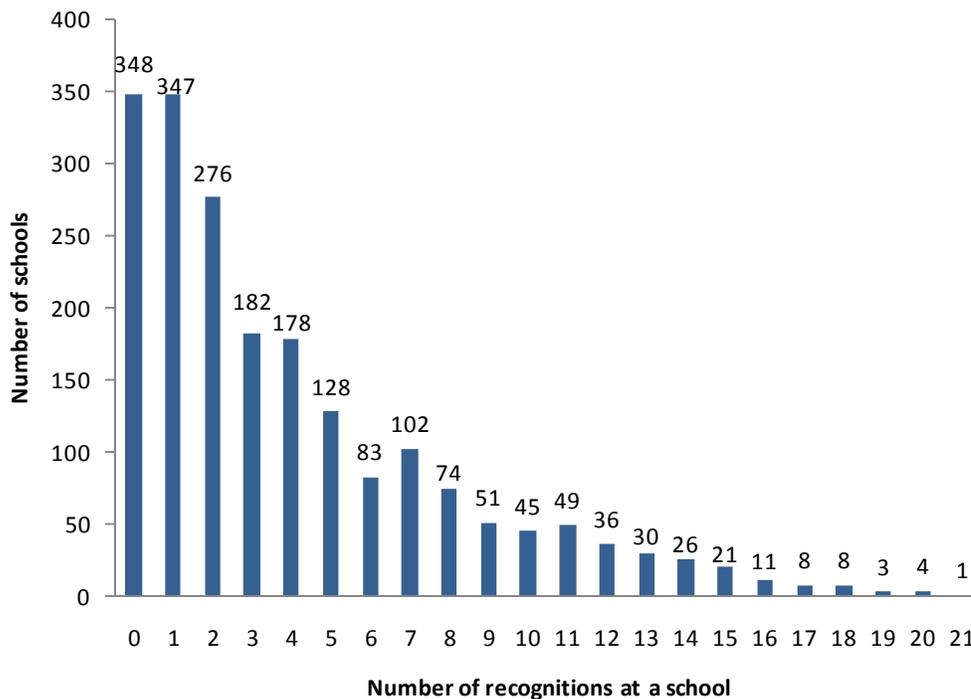
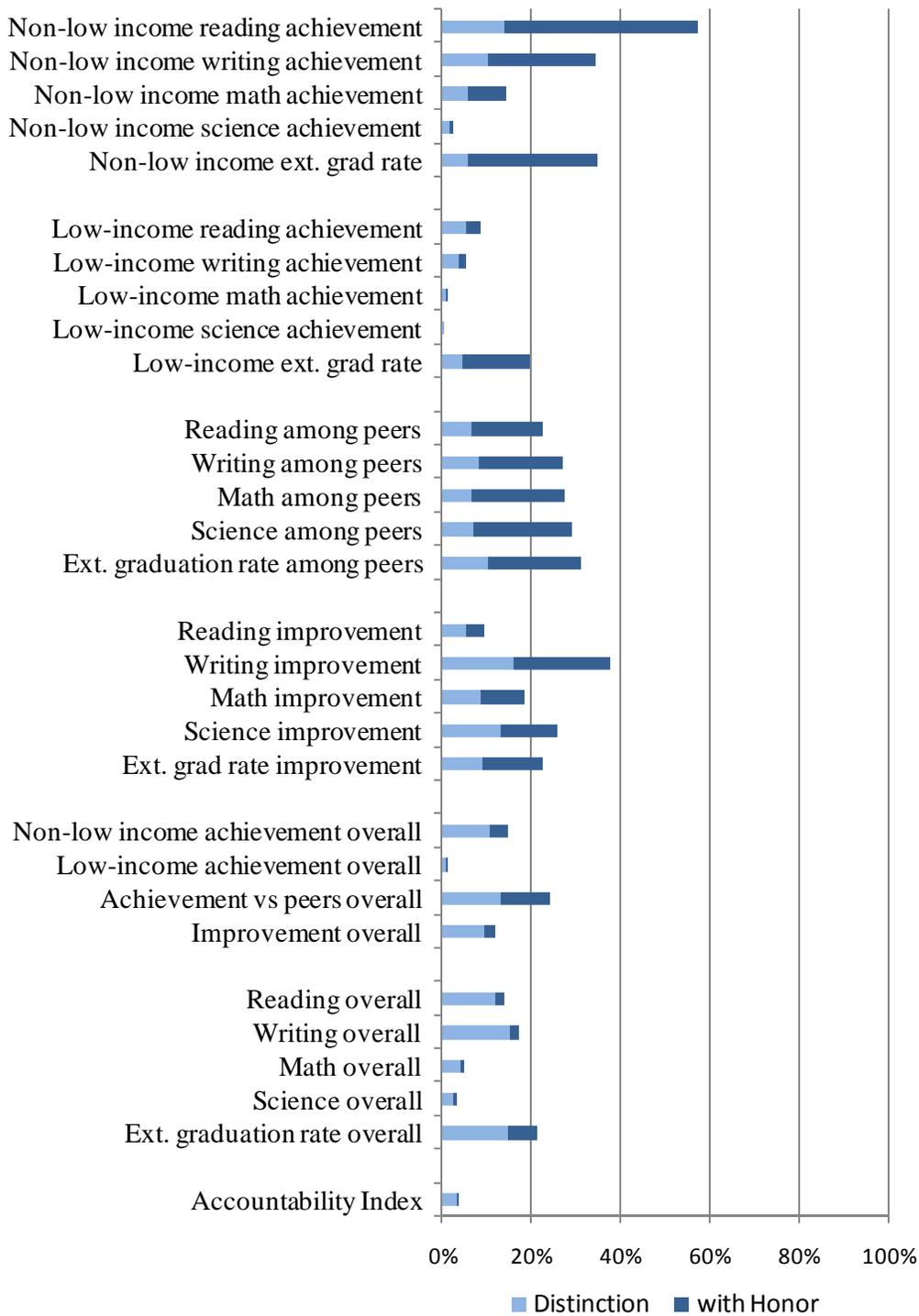


Figure 11 shows the percentage of all schools that met the criteria for recognition (“distinction”) in each of the 30 cells in 2007. The largest number of schools (57%) met the criteria for non-low income reading achievement. Achievement in math, science, and among low-income students had far fewer schools meeting the criteria. Less than 4% had an overall average of 5.25 or better on the accountability index over the 2-year period. Although schools would have received recognition in a total of 8,164 areas, this number represents less than 16% of the total number of cells in which schools could earn recognition.

**Figure 11: Percentage of Schools with Recognition, 2007**



This system of recognition will supplement and could replace some types of recognition currently in place. The federal government provides funding for three types of awards, primarily for schools receiving Title I funds. OSPI also provides awards but no funding as part of the recognition (Appendix A provides more information on these awards). Schools and districts that receive recognition in the proposed system will not be compensated

monetarily, except possibly for schoolwide bonuses for all school staff based on “multiple measures of student performance.” These bonuses have been recommended by the Basic Education Finance Task Force in its December 2008 report to the Legislature. The proposed recognition system could be used as a basis for these rewards. For example, staff in schools that have a 2-year average in overall improvement of at least 5.25 could be given the schoolwide bonus. In 2007, about 12% of the schools statewide met this criterion. The amount of the bonus suggested by OSPI was \$20 to \$50 per student FTE. Other types of recognition, with or without financial awards, could be developed. These could be available to all that meet certain criteria and/or be competitive in nature.

\* \* \* \* \*

The proposed accountability index needs to be flexible. Changes in NCLB requirements, graduation requirements, the graduation rate formulas, the assessment system, and content standards may have an impact on some measures, which may require changes to the system. As data systems improve statewide and more information becomes available, other indicators could be added to the system and other more sophisticated analyses could be used (e.g., growth models). These changes could be in the form of additional columns in the matrix (e.g., college eligible rates) or additional factors outside the matrix that could be included when calculating the index (e.g., funding amount of local levies).

A number of issues must still be resolved before the index can be implemented effectively. Further review of the cut points and results generated by those cut points should occur to ensure the index measures the achievement and improvement the Board intends. In addition, the method for measuring improvement needs to be reviewed, particularly when a school is already achieving at very high levels or far above its peers. Moreover, various OSPI and SBE activities need to be integrated and aligned with one another to avoid duplication and confusion (e.g., how the index relates to NCLB requirements, how to use the index to identify Priority schools and districts, how and when assistance and recognition occur, how index results are represented and made available to the public, what determines “making AYP”). Finally, some method of measuring community and legislative support needs to be incorporated to ensure “reciprocal accountability.” Several national technical advisors will provide input on these issues.

Appendix A provides more details about how the index is calculated. Appendix B provides a list of possible data that could be used to identify Priority schools. Appendix C gives an overview of the current state assistance system that is funded primarily by the federal government. Appendix D lists the names of those who provided advice and feedback during the development of this proposal. Appendix E provides information on the State Board’s legislative mandate to create an accountability system. Appendix F provides draft language related to the Board’s position on accountability. Appendix G describes the concepts of the Priority Tier (Innovation Zone).

## APPENDIX A

### INDICATORS AND OUTCOMES

This appendix provides detailed information about how the indicators and outcomes were selected and how the accountability index is calculated.

#### OVERVIEW

One of the guiding principles for the accountability system is the use of multiple measures. The advisors (see Appendix D) recommended using five outcomes and four indicators, resulting in a 5x4 matrix with 20 measures. Other indicators and outcomes were discussed besides the WASL and graduation rates, and the advisors wanted to include other outcome data in order to have multiple measures. However, no other reliable and accurate data are available statewide that is collected in a consistent manner. Moreover, using more indicators (e.g., results for separate student groups such as ELL or each race/ethnic group) would make the system much more complicated.

The index is achieved by using the simple average of the ratings across the 20 outcomes. The graduation rate is not applicable for elementary and middle schools, but these types of schools have multiple grades with WASL results that generate the ratings. By using averages, schools without data for some indicators are still included in the system and a separate system is not needed for different types of schools to generate the index.

The advisors preferred a system that uses fixed criteria rather than norm-referenced measures in order to keep the measures simple and to avoid changing goals over time and the use of measures (e.g., standard deviations) that vary by subject. This means that goals are fixed for all subjects and recognition is given when schools and districts meet certain criteria (there would not be a limit to how many schools can be recognized, unlike the Schools of Distinction which only recognizes the top 5% based on improvement). With fixed criteria in place, a school and district would know in advance what it needed to do to achieve a rating and to receive recognition, regardless of how others perform. It would also encourage cooperation among educators because they would not be competing with one another for recognition.

The advisors discussed other types of analyses that could provide more accurate results (e.g., hierarchical linear modeling, value-added growth models). However, these methods were not selected because they lack transparency, are overly complex, and are not calculated easily at the school and district levels due to capacity and software limitations.

#### Comparison with Current AYP Methods

All stakeholder groups believed the federal AYP system is not a valid way to identify schools and districts for recognition and additional support. The advisors felt the current system is too complex, has too many adjustments, and is neither transparent nor fair in its accountability determinations. For example, AYP has different goals for reading and math at three different grade levels, the goals change over time, performance is adjusted with margins of error, some students are not counted (those enrolled after October 1), and schools

and districts have different minimum numbers (N) for counting the results. Moreover, AYP is almost entirely punitive in nature and has unrealistic goals. Schools must meet up to 37 goals, and districts must meet as many as 111 goals. (Federal regulations issued in October 2008 added eight more goals for high schools and districts due to the requirement to use disaggregated graduation rates when determining AYP.) Not meeting just one goal leads to negative consequences and labeling. The consequences are the same regardless of how many goals are missed and by how much. If a school “needs improvement,” students in groups that meet the goals must be allowed to transfer to another school, with transportation costs paid by the district. This can reduce the school’s academic performance even further. In addition, AYP does not include two subjects (writing and science) that are assessed in a standardized manner statewide, which has resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum. Finally, AYP’s narrow emphasis on students who meet standard has often resulted in more focused help being given to students that perform near that cut point (sometimes called the “bubble kids”) at the expense of students who are farther above and below that level of performance.

The proposed system is preferred because it is more inclusive and less complex than the federal AYP system. The ratings are based on the results for all students, including those who are not “continuously enrolled” since October 1. No margin of error is used, and the minimum N is 10 across the entire school/district (rather than a grade). This increases the chance that very small schools and districts (e.g., those with less than 10 students in a grade) are included in the accountability system. For example, a K-6 school that has only 4 students in each tested grade (grades 3-6) would have a total of 16 students with assessment results and would therefore be included in the system. (Grade-level results are not reported when there are fewer than 10 students in a grade in order to keep the results confidential.) Grade configurations are not an issue when calculating the results because the same benchmarks are used for each grade and subject. (AYP uses grade bands of 3-5, 6-8, and 10 with separate benchmarks and results generated for each grade band, regardless of the school’s grade configuration. The calculations to compute school results can become very complex and therefore lack transparency.) The current AYP system for holding *districts* accountable is even more complex than the school accountability system. It has different rules and sometimes produces results that are at odds with its school-level results (e.g., a district might not make AYP but all its schools do and vice versa). A district’s size is currently the major determinant in its AYP results—only two districts with fewer than 1,000 students are in improvement status. The proposed district accountability system is essentially the same as the system for schools, which makes it relatively easier to understand and compute.

### **USING THE INDEX**

The results from the 20 ratings create an index number for each school and district based on the average rating. Schools and districts are assigned to five “tiers” based on their index number (4.00 is the middle of the 1-7 scale).

- Those with the highest index numbers, from 5.50 to 7.00, are in the “exemplary” tier.
- Those with an index of 5.00 to 5.49 are in the “very good” tier.
- Those with an index of 4.00 to 4.99 are in the “good” tier.
- Those with an index of 2.50 to 3.99 are in the “acceptable” tier.
- Those with an index of 1.00 to 2.49 are in the “struggling” tier.

Schools should not be compared and judgments should not be made about school quality based solely on their overall index score. Even though the index uses multiple measures, some schools have missing data that can affect their index number. Moreover, schools that administer assessments with lower scores overall (e.g., science and math) will tend to have a lower index score than those that do not. For example, schools serving grades 5, 8, and 10 give the science WASL, and these results tend to be very low compared to the other subjects. So a K-4 school will likely have a higher index score than a K-5 or K-8 school. As a result, the index is only comparable across schools that serve the same grades. In addition, the index does not reflect how close a school may be to the benchmarks—small differences in results could still generate different ratings (e.g., 89%=6 and 91%=7). Moreover, schools serving very few students may have more volatile ratings from year to year. Finally, the lack of vertical alignment of the assessments presents another complicating factor when making comparisons across schools that serve different grade levels.

Given the different types of schools being rating, school results should be reported for similar types of schools. The six suggested categories for reporting the results are as follows:

- *elementary schools* (those serving from kindergarten up to grade 6)
- *middle/junior high schools* (those serving only 6,7 or 8)
- *high schools* (grades 9 or 10 to 12)
- *comprehensive schools* (e.g., K-8, K-12)
- *schools serving special populations* (alternative schools, correctional facilities, those primarily serving ELL students and those with disabilities, private schools on contract)
- *small schools* (those which have their results suppressed because they have fewer than 10 assessed students).

Many districts have only one school, so the district and school index, tier, and recognition would be the same. This has implications for how the state structures the consequences of the accountability system (either with assistance or recognition).

The accountability index needs to remain flexible. Changes in NCLB requirements (e.g., number of tested grades), graduation requirements, the method for calculating graduation rates, the assessment system (e.g., moving to end-of-course exams in math, adjustments to cut scores), and content standards (e.g., science) may impact on some measures, which may require adjustments in the details of the index. As data systems improve statewide and more information becomes available, other indicators can be added to the system<sup>7</sup> and other more sophisticated analyses could be used (e.g., growth models). Other measures of improvement could be used. Changes could also be in the form of additional columns in the matrix (e.g., college eligible rates) or additional factors outside the matrix that could be included to provide contextual information (e.g., local levies information, details about students served).

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<sup>7</sup> Most of the other outcomes relate to high schools and the transition to higher education. Some data require transcript information, such as AP enrollment, dual enrollment, and college-eligibility rates. Other data sources could provide information about college entrance exams, college going and persistence rates, and remediation rates in higher education institutions. Community factors, such as local levy and bond results and other forms of support, could be included if data are available. This would provide more transparency about the operating environment and acknowledge the role that factors outside the education system have on student performance.

## CALCULATION METHODS

To calculate the assessment-related measures, student-level data are used and aggregated to the school and districts levels. This provides more accurate results than using aggregated school and district results. Moreover, using student-level data allows for the aggregation of results from the grade level that would be suppressed because the number of students assessed was less than 10. Results are only suppressed when there are fewer than 10 students assessed in the combined grades, and they are not computed when there are less than five students in a cell to avoid having results for a small number of students affect the index results.<sup>8</sup> Students who take alternate assessments (WAAS) are included in the calculations, as are students who previously passed (this relates mainly to high school students that met standard while in grade 9, but it also applies to students that are retained). Students who are exempted from taking the assessments (i.e., those with excused absences and medical exemptions, first-year ELL students, home-based and private school students) are not included in the calculations. If students who met standard in a previous year do not have their level included in a student-level database, they are considered to have performed at Level 3. For grade 10 results, the highest score achieved through the August testing period is used (this includes results for students who met standard in grade 9 and any retakes that result in higher scores). Results during grades 11 and 12 will be considered when looking at the Struggling tier schools and districts to determine if they should be included in the Priority tier. This recognizes the districts that go to extra effort to help students who are in danger of not graduating unless they pass the required assessments.

When computing the index, all the ratings are counted equally (i.e., they are not weighted), although achievement is considered most important, which is why it represents three of the four indicators. Averages are computed only for cells of the matrix that have data (e.g., an elementary school has no graduation data, so the averages for the indicators use only the assessment results). District results are based on OSPI's aggregation rules, so the district results do not include results from correctional institutions, tribal schools, private schools or agencies providing services, vocational schools/skill centers, schools that enroll more than 50% of their students from another district, and schools operated by a college or university that are not affiliated with a district. Finally, the results are those for a single year rather than averages over multiple years for simplicity and to avoid the distortions when change takes place over time (e.g., when averaging, schools that have dramatic declines have better outcomes and schools with dramatic increases have worse outcomes).<sup>9</sup> However, the annual results should be viewed across multiple years before drawing conclusions about schools or districts.

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<sup>8</sup> Very small schools (those with fewer than 10 assessed students) will have their index calculated but it will not be made public. However, the index will be viewed by state officials, and if the index is in the struggling tier on a consistent basis, the school could be placed in the Priority tier. Some schools have grade configurations that do not include some tested subjects (e.g., a K-4 school does not give any science test), but there may still be a small number of students that are assigned a grade where the test is given (e.g., a 5<sup>th</sup> grader attending a K-4 school). When this occurs, the results for the few students are not included in the school index calculation to prevent them from generating another set of indicators for that subject. The results for these students are still included in the district results.

<sup>9</sup> In small schools, a single student could cause large changes in the index from year to year. However, analyses found relatively little difference in the amount of change in small schools compared to larger schools from one year to the next.

**INDICATOR 1: ACHIEVEMENT OF NON-LOW INCOME STUDENTS**

This indicator examines outcomes for students who are not identified as living in low-income families (i.e., not eligible for a free or reduced-price meal). The five outcomes are the four subjects tested by the WASL/WAAS statewide (reading, writing, math, and science) and the extended graduation rate (see explanation on how the rate is calculated below). Using results for non-low income students separate from those for low-income families (used in the second indicator described below) means no student is double counted. (Under the current AYP rules, some students are counted as many as five times, while others are counted twice.) This reflects the belief that all students have equal value and no group of students is more important than any other group.

The percent meeting standard includes both the results of the WASL and the WAAS, which is given to students with disabilities. Subgroups results (for the various race/ethnicity groups, ELL, students with disabilities, gender) are used when examining the Struggling tier schools and districts to determine if they should be included in the Priority tier. Results for low-income students are used in aggregate in a separate indicator described below.

The benchmarks and ratings for this indicator in the four assessed subjects and the extended graduation rate are as follows:

- Achievement on *assessments* is rated based on the following percentage of students meeting standard:

90-100% .....	7
80-89.9% .....	6
60-79.9% .....	5
60-69.9% .....	4
50-59.9% .....	3
40-49.9% .....	2
< 40% .....	1

- Achievement on the *graduation rate* is rated on the extended graduation rate from the previous year (see below for more information on how the graduation rate is calculated):

> 95% .....	7
90.1-95% .....	6
85.1-90% .....	5
80.1-85% .....	4
75.1-80% .....	3
70.0-75% .....	2
< 70% .....	1

Students from all tested grades in a school are combined for each subject, and the percentage of these students that meet standard on their respective tests is the school’s percent meeting standard for that subject. This means the index can be calculated easily, regardless of a school’s grade configuration (although grade configurations influence the results due to differences in the tests given). The same scoring benchmarks are used for all subjects. This

gives equal importance to each subject.<sup>10</sup> It also encourages the vertical alignment of the state assessments.

A school/district must have at least 10 students for it to be included in the accountability index. The minimum number used by OSPI is 10, but this policy is applied at the test and grade level. Using an N of 10 for a *school* means that very small schools will now be included in the accountability system because they will likely have at least 10 students assessed across the entire school. Combining all the test results together and using an N at the school level increases the overall N so a single student in a small school has less impact on the results and causes less of a change in the results from year to year. By using this system, scores in many schools that are currently suppressed at the grade level when there is less than 10 students assessed will become known in their aggregate form. This N policy means the state accountability system is more inclusive than the current AYP system, where the N is 30 and applies only students who are continuously enrolled (the N is larger for some student groups and at the district level when there are more than 3,000 students enrolled). The advisors felt that the education system has a moral responsibility to serve all students, and having a small minimum N and counting students who have not been in class all year helps hold schools accountable for meeting the needs of *all* their students.

## **INDICATOR 2: ACHIEVEMENT OF LOW INCOME STUDENTS**

This indicator focuses on the performance of low-income students, who are defined as those who are eligible to receive a federally-subsidized meal (e.g., free or reduced-price lunch). This indicator uses the same five outcomes as the Achievement, i.e., the percentage of low-income students that meet standard on the four assessed subjects (reading, writing, math, and science) and that graduate by age 21 (the extended graduation rate). The same benchmarks and rating scales are used as well. The percentage of low-income students in high schools is often higher than what is reported, but this measure is still the best available proxy for socioeconomic status.

Having a separate indicator for low-income students highlights how well these vulnerable students are performing. Much research has shown that student achievement is highly correlated with a family's socioeconomic status. Specifically, academic achievement among students who live in a low-income family is usually far below students from families that are not considered low income. This indicator is highly correlated with the percentage of ELL students and students of color, two groups of students that often have lower levels of student achievement. The indicator is also positively correlated with students with disabilities and

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<sup>10</sup> The advisors did not have consensus about how to include science results in the index. Some felt that science should not be included at all because of changing standards and that it is not being taken seriously in many cases, which results in low scores across the state and relatively little improvement over time. As a result, it has little ability to differentiate school performance. Some suggested using lower cut points and raising them over time or including science but giving it less weight. After much discussion, a majority of the advisors concluded that since science will be a graduation requirement relatively soon, the only way to have science taken seriously was to treat it like the other subjects. Keeping the same rating system as the other subjects also keeps the system consistent and less complex and provides the opportunity to receive high ratings for improvement. Moreover, science achievement affects only two of the 20 cells of the matrix. Finally, not including science with equal weight penalizes those who work hard in this subject, and it would send the wrong message about the importance of students learning science concepts.

mobility.<sup>11</sup> This does not imply that a student's socioeconomic status captures all the unique needs of students of color, students with disabilities, those learning English, or those who are mobile. These students face additional challenges in Washington schools that affect their learning.<sup>12</sup>

The results of both the non-low income and low-income indicators are provided on OSPI's online Report Card. Unlike the current AYP results, the performances of both groups are not adjusted in any way (i.e., no margin of error or exclusions of non-continuously enrolled students).

### **INDICATOR 3: ACHIEVEMENT VS. PEERS**

This indicator uses the Learning Index (described below) level and controls for student characteristics beyond a school's control. Scores are the difference between the school's adjusted level and the average level among the school's peers. Specifically, the school/district score is the unstandardized residuals generated by a multiple regression. Those with scores above 0 are performing better than those with the same student characteristics, and those with scores below 0 are performing below those with the same student characteristics. Separate analyses are run for elementary, middle, high, and comprehensive (e.g., K-12) schools because of the variation of the variables at each grade level. Schools serving specialized student populations (e.g., alternative schools, ELL and special education centers, private schools on contract, institutions) are not included in the regressions. Excluding these schools provides a better predicted level for the remaining regular schools in the analysis and better data for use when determining the cut scores for the various ratings. Since the specialized schools have such different characteristics, results for this indicator are not computed and their index is based on an average of their remaining ratings.

For schools, four student characteristics are the independent variables in the multiple regression: the percentage of (1) low-income students (percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch<sup>13</sup>), (2) English language learners, (3) students with disabilities, and (4) mobile students (not continuously enrolled). A school's Learning Index from each of the four assessments (using WASL and WAAS results) as well as the extended graduation rate for high schools are the dependent variables. The regressions are weighted by the number of students assessed to prevent a small "outlier" school from distorting the regression (predicted) line. Although there is a high correlation between all the independent variables except special education, the regressions showed that all four variables helped improve the quality of the predicted levels, regardless of the regression method used.

For districts, three of the four student characteristics used in the school analysis were the independent variables in the multiple regression: the percentage of (1) low-income students (percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), (2) students with disabilities, and (3) mobile

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<sup>11</sup> The statewide correlations between the percentage of students considered low-income and the percentage of students of color and ELL students in a school are .70 and .68 respectively. More than 86% of the ELL students are from low-income families. The correlations with mobility and special education are .49 and .27 respectively.

<sup>12</sup> The Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) has convened an advisory committee to develop a strategic plan to address the achievement gap for African American students, as outlined in HB 2722.

<sup>13</sup> The percentage of students in high schools who are eligible is sometimes higher than what is reported, but this proxy for socioeconomic status is still the best available.

students (not continuously enrolled in a school). The percentage of English language learners was not used because analyses including this variable do not provide meaningful results. The same five dependent variables from the school-level analyses were used in the district analyses (the Learning Index for the four subjects and the extended graduation rate).

Financial information is also used as an independent variable in the district analysis. This information is only available at the district level, and some communities are able to raise higher levels of funding. The financial variable used is the total amount of operating expenditures per weighted pupil (funding used for capital purposes is not included). This variable controls for the level of funds spent in the district and does not include spending for capital projects. Weighting the student count “inflates” the enrollment figure because certain students require more resources to educate. The extra weight for ELL and low-income students is .20, which is the typical amount used in school finance studies (although the actual number is likely to be much higher). The weight for students with disabilities is .93, which is consistent with both the national research and the level of funding provided by the state. This weighting system effectively “subtracts” the extra amount of funding that districts receive from their total based on the level of students in their district who generate additional funding, which makes the financial amounts comparable.

- Achievement vs. Peers on the *assessments* is rated based on the difference between the actual and predicted Learning Index levels:

> .20	.....7
.151 to .20	.....6
.051 to .15	.....5
-.05 to .05	.....4
-.051 to -.15	.....3
-.151 to -.20	.....2
< -.20	.....1

- Achievement vs. Peers on the *extended graduation rate* is rated based on the percentage point difference between the actual and predicted extended graduation rate:

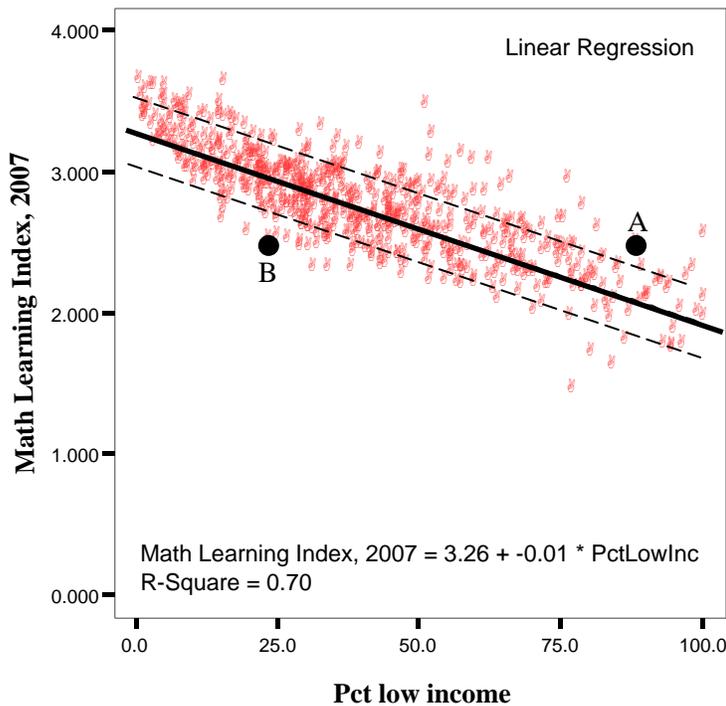
> 12	.....7
6.1 to 12	.....6
3.1 to 6	.....5
-3 to 3	.....4
-3.1 to -6	.....3
-6.1 to -12	.....2
< -12	.....1

The mobility measure may need to be refined after further discussion takes place. Currently there is no common definition of mobility, and migrant student data does not include many students who are mobile. OSPI’s student data system includes information about students who are/are not continuously enrolled from October 1 through the end of the testing period in May as part of the AYP system. Using this measure, the average state mobility rate is less than 6%. Most schools with mobility rates above 15% are alternative schools, and very few districts (mainly those in Pierce County close to military bases) have many of their schools with this high of a rate. However, the proposed measure may not identify students who move in and out of a school or district multiple times during the school year and are considered

continuously enrolled, nor does it identify students that are new to the district and are still enrolled during the entire year. The proposed measure, the percentage of non-continuously enrolled students, can be used until a better measure is identified.

The scatterplot in Figure 12 illustrates how this indicator is calculated, although it shows just one of the independent variables (percent low income students) in relation to one outcome (K-6 math results). Each dot represents an elementary school. The dark line is the average (predicted) level for a given Learning Index and low-income percentage. The vertical distance between the school and the line is the difference from the predicted level. In this example, schools A and B have almost identical Learning Index results, but school A falls well above the line while school B falls well below the line. The dashed lines running parallel to the trend line represent the highest and lowest cut points used for the ratings (.20 above and .20 below the trend line). When this kind of analysis is done factoring in the other variables (ELL, special education, mobility) at the same time in a multiple regression calculation, the distance from the predicted line is the school's score, which produces a rating. If the low-income variable was the only one used in the analysis, school A would have a rating of 7 because its index is more than .20 points above its predicted level, while school B would have a rating of 1 because its index falls more than .20 points below the predicted level.

**Figure 12: Scatterplot of Math Results in Elementary Schools by Percent Low Income**



The advisors discussed other possible independent variables that could be included in the analysis. These include the percentage of students who are enrolled in a gifted program, the percentage of minority students, and school size (enrollment).

- A gifted variable was not included because of a lack of reliable data, although the system should somehow take into account when a school has concentrations of these students. These schools will likely have very high achievement ratings.

- A race/ethnicity variable was not included because it is highly correlated with the other variables. Statistical analyses that included this variable found it added very little to the explanatory power of the model. Moreover, using this variable would reduce our ability to identify schools where students of color are treated differently. Finally, many of these students are also from low-income families, which is a separate indicator.
- A school size variable was not included because research findings to date reveal mixed results about how school enrollment levels affect student outcomes. School size is also a factor that can be controlled somewhat at the district level through the use of specialized programs and boundary lines. Other methods can be used to help schools compare themselves to those with similar sizes once the accountability results are made known.

The **Learning Index** is the dependent variable used in this indicator and for the Improvement indicator described below. This index, which was developed by the Commission on Student Learning and refined by the A+ Commission,<sup>14</sup> takes into account the percentage of students performing at the different WASL levels. Specifically, the WASL and WAAS tests have five levels of performance:

- Level 0 – No score given<sup>15</sup>
- Level 1 – Well below standard
- Level 2 – Partially meets standard
- Level 3 – Meets standard
- Level 4 – Exceeds standard

This index is calculated like a grade point average with 4.0 as the highest score and reflects the level of student performance across the entire range of proficiency, not just those meeting standard. It gives greater weight to higher levels of proficiency on the state assessments and provides an incentive to support the learning of all students, including those well below standard (Level 1) and those that already meet the standard (Level 3) so they can move up to the next level. There is a “ceiling effect” when using this measure, but preliminary results show that even high-performing schools were achieving large gains because of the movement of students from Level 3 to Level 4. Once a school has all of its students in Level 4, there would not be any possibility to improvement any more, but all ratings together would still result in a school being in highest tier.

The following example shows how the Learning Index is calculated. The same method is used to calculate the index for all WASL tests (reading, mathematics, writing, science) in all the tested grades:

- Level 0: 5% of all students assessed
- Level 1: 15% of all students assessed
- Level 2: 20% of all students assessed
- Level 3: 40% of all students assessed
- Level 4: 20% of all students assessed

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<sup>14</sup> These Commissions are no longer in existence.

<sup>15</sup> The “No Score” designation includes unexcused absences, refusals to take the test, no test booklets but enrolled, incomplete tests, invalidations, and out-of-grade level tests.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Learning Index} &= (0*0.05) + (1*0.15) + (2*0.20) + (3*0.40) + (4*0.20) \\ &= 0 + .15 + .40 + 1.20 + .80 = 2.55 \end{aligned}$$

**INDICATOR 4: IMPROVEMENT**

The Improvement indicator relies on changes in the Learning Index for the four assessed subjects and the extended graduation rate from one year to the next. Specifically:

- Improvement on *assessments* is rated on the annual change in the Learning Index:

> .15 .....	7
.101 to .15 .....	6
.051 to .10 .....	5
-.05 to .05 .....	4
-.051 to -.10 .....	3
-.101 to -.15 .....	2
< -.15 .....	1

- Improvement on the *extended graduation rate* is rated on the percentage point change in the rate from the previous year (see below for information on how graduation rates are calculated):

> 6 .....	7
4.1 to 6 .....	6
2.1 to 4 .....	5
-2 to 2 .....	4
-2.1 to -4 .....	3
-4.1 to -6 .....	2
< -6 .....	1

A one-year change is used rather than using averages of previous years or a change from a year further in the past because it is the simplest calculation, it reflects the most recent set of results, and it does not distort the most recent results (using a two-year average helps a school if scores go down and penalizes the school if scores go up). New schools would only need two years of data to generate an improvement score. Since results are created each year, changes over time are seen when examining the results across multiple years.

The advisors discussed other possible improvement measures, including a 10% reduction in those not meeting standard (the AYP “safe harbor” measure), a 25% reduction in those not meeting standard over a 3-year period (the goal used for grade 4 reading several years ago), a percentage point gain from the previous year (or over several years), and a change in the scale score. While each of these have merit, the advisors determined that the annual change in the Learning Index provided the best measure of improvement because it focused on more than just those meeting standard and uses available data. The other measures can be used when analyzing Struggling tier schools and districts for possible designation in the Priority tier.

## EXTENDED GRADUATION RATE MEASURE

The Washington State definition of the on-time graduation rate is the percentage of students who graduate from public high school with a regular diploma (not including a GED or any other diploma not fully aligned with the state's academic content standards) in the standard number of years. The period of time required for students with disabilities to graduate is specified in each individualized education program (IEP). Students with disabilities who earn a diploma by completing the requirements of an IEP in the required period of time are counted as on-time graduates. The period of time required for ELL and migrant students to graduate is determined on an individual basis when they enter the district and may be longer than the standard number of years. The period of time required to graduate for a migrant student who is not LEP and does not have an IEP can be one year beyond the standard number of years. LEP and migrant students who earn a diploma in the required period of time are counted as on-time graduates.

The **on-time** graduation rate is calculated as follows:<sup>16</sup>

$$\text{On-Time Graduation Rate} = 100 * (1 - \text{grade 9 dropout rate}) * (1 - \text{grade 10 dropout rate}) * (1 - \text{grade 11 dropout rate}) * (1 - \text{grade 12 dropout rate} - \text{grade 12 continuing rate})$$

with  $\text{Dropout Rate} = \frac{\text{number of students with a dropout, unknown, GED completer code}}{\text{total number of students served (less transfers out and juvenile detention)}}$

To encourage schools to serve students who remain in school beyond 4 years, a separate graduation rate is calculated that includes students who graduate in more than 4 years. This “**extended rate**” is used for AYP purposes and the rate used in the accountability index. The formula for calculating this rate is as follows:

$$\text{Extended Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{number of on-time and late graduates}}{\# \text{ of on-time graduates} / \text{on-time graduation rate}}$$

Dropouts are not counted as transfers. Since graduation data are not reported until after the beginning of the school year, the rates from the previous year are used.

The calculation method may change in the future when the state has enough data to track students over the entire time period. The cut scores for determining the ratings may need to change if another method produces substantially different results.

## DISTRIBUTION OF INDEX

Some stakeholders have voiced concern that the index might be unfair and might over-identify schools and districts that have more challenging student populations as those that are in the Struggling tier. Given the high correlation between family income and student

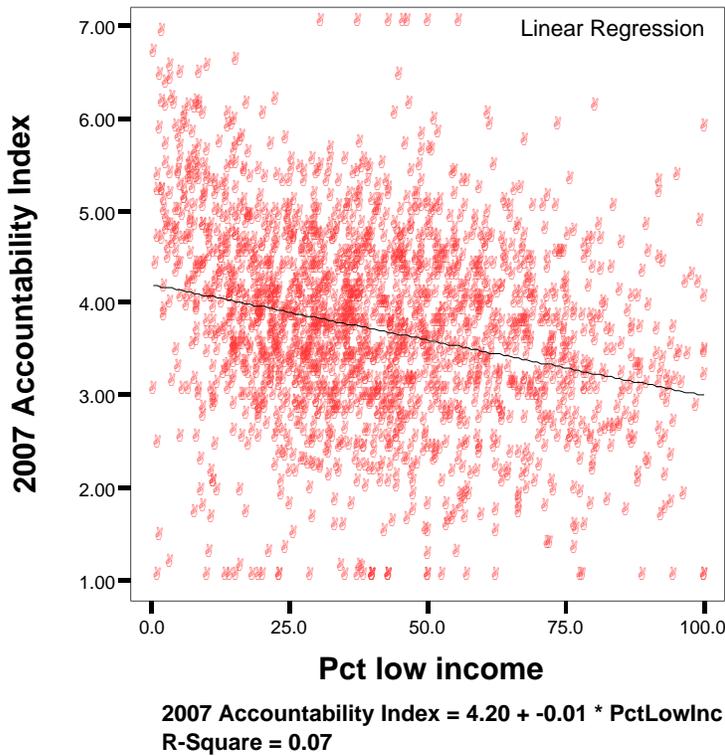
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<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/pubdocs/GradDropout/03-04/Graduationanddropoutstatistics2003-04Final.pdf>, chapter 1, for more information about these formulas.

performance, analyses were conducted to see how the index related to the percentage of low-income students in a school and district.

Figure 13 shows these results for the 2,011 schools used in the analysis, while Figure 14 shows the results for the 291 districts. These figures show a much weaker relationship between the two variables than what would be seen if the dependent variable was achievement for all students. Many schools and districts that have relatively few low-income students still have rather low index scores, while many that have high concentrations of low-income students have rather high index scores. The trend line is still sloping downward, but the correlations and r-squares are rather weak (-.26 and .07 for schools, -.18 and .03 for districts). These are much weaker than the relationship between the student achievement of all students and their socioeconomic status because achievement for low-income students represents only 25% of the index and is moderated by the improvement and peers variables that have very low correlations with socioeconomic status. (The strongest correlation for schools was for writing improvement at -.091.)

**Figure 13: Scatterplot of 2007 Index for All Rated Schools, by Percent Low Income**



**Figure 14: Scatterplot of Index for Districts, by Percent Low Income**

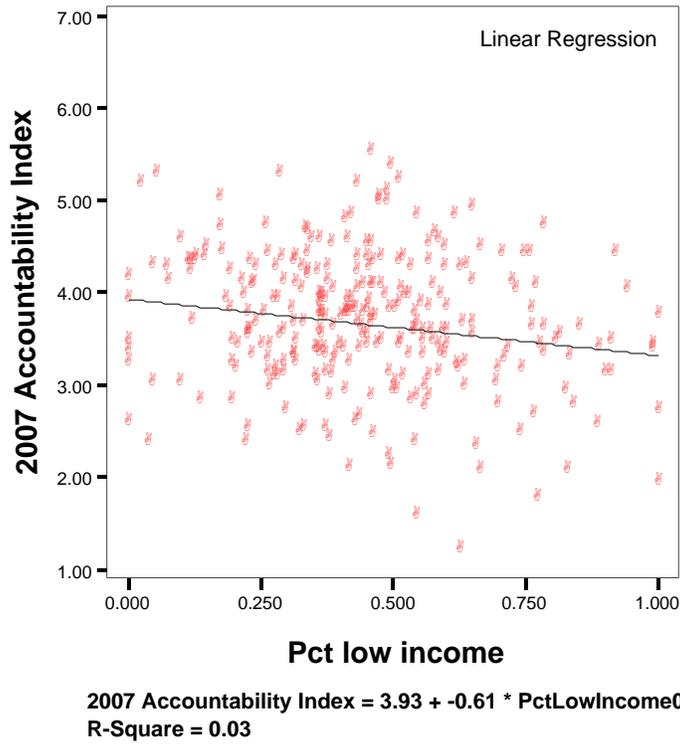


Table 11 shows the average (mean) rating and standard deviation for each cell in the matrix among schools, along with the number of schools receiving a rating in the cell.

**Table 11: Descriptive Statistics for Schools, 2007**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Non-Low Income Reading Achievement Rating	1,894	5.28	1.30
Non-Low Income Writing Achievement Rating	1,737	4.71	1.60
Non-Low Income Math Achievement Rating	1,893	3.88	1.50
Non-Low Income Science Achievement Rating	1,727	2.34	1.43
Non-Low Income Ext. Graduation Rate Rating (Class of '06)	463	3.99	2.37
Low Income Reading Achievement Rating	1,842	3.62	1.29
Low Income Writing Achievement Rating	1,632	3.06	1.56
Low Income Math Achievement Rating	1,840	2.00	1.13
Low Income Science Achievement Rating	1,621	1.17	0.53
Low Income Extended Graduation Rate Rating (Class of '06)	443	2.97	2.29
Reading Peer Rating	1,782	4.07	1.72
Writing Peer Rating	1,732	4.04	2.07
Math Peer Rating	1,782	4.08	1.98
Science Peer Rating	1,729	4.06	2.09
Extended Graduation Rate Peer rating	327	4.26	1.99
Reading Improvement Rating	1,952	3.60	1.85
Writing Improvement Rating	1,873	4.38	2.32
Math Improvement Rating	1,952	4.72	1.82
Science Improvement Rating	1,845	4.41	2.13
Extended Graduation Rate Improvement Rating (2005 to 2006)	452	3.45	2.37
Average rating for Reading	1,976	4.11	1.19
Average rating for Writing	1,899	4.06	1.55
Average rating for Math	1,976	3.66	1.26
Average rating for Science	1,898	3.07	1.35
Average rating for Extended Graduation Rate	473	3.54	1.85
Average rating for Non-Low Income Achievement	1,955	4.02	1.29
Average rating for Low Income Achievement	1,907	2.54	1.04
Average rating for Achievement vs Peers	1,783	4.07	1.57
Average rating for Improvement	1,980	4.25	1.35
<i>Average rating for Accountability Index</i>	<i>2,011</i>	<i>3.71</i>	<i>1.05</i>

## **RECOGNITION SYSTEM**

Many of the guiding principles apply to the recognition system. The system should:

- Be transparent and simple to understand;
- Rely on multiple measures;
- Encourage the improvement of student learning and cooperation among educators;
- Focus at both the school and district levels;
- Rely mainly on criterion-referenced measures; and
- Provide multiple ways to demonstrate success and earn recognition.

With these principles in mind, the same matrix that is used to generate the index is also used to identify schools and districts for recognition. Cut points were developed for all 30 cells of the matrix after looking at distributions of the ratings for all schools. (The impact of the cut points on *districts* was not calculated for this analysis. Districts have fewer high ratings, as noted in Figures 1 and 5, so they would receive recognition less often than schools). To

ensure recognition does not occur based on one good year alone, two years are averaged, and the simple average must meet minimum criteria.

Different cut points are used for different parts of the matrix because it is harder to achieve high ratings for some cells.

- For the “inner” 20 cells of the matrix, at least a 5.50 average is needed to receive recognition. To meet this level, a school/district needs to receive at least one 5 and one 6, or it could reach that rating with another combination of higher and lower scores in a 2-year period (e.g., two ratings of 6 or a 4 and 7). A school could not reach this average if one of its yearly ratings was below 4. Cells that average 6.0 or better would receive recognition with “honors.”
- For the 10 “averaged” cells on the outside of the matrix, at least a 5.25 is needed. This lower average is justified because it is much harder to achieve an average of 5.50 in the multiple categories. Relatively few schools and districts would be recognized even at this lower level—on average less than 12% of schools reached this level in the 10 cells, and even fewer districts reached this level (districts do not have as many high ratings).
  - ✓ To meet an average of 5.50 in each of the *five outcome categories* (the four assessments and the graduation rate), a school/district needs to have a total of 22 points in the four indicator ratings ( $22/4=5.50$ ). This would usually require a majority of ratings of at least a 5 in two consecutive years.
  - ✓ To meet this level in each of the *four indicator categories* (non-low income achievement, low-income achievement, achievement vs. peers, improvement), a high school and district need to have at least 27 points in the five outcome ratings ( $26.25/5=5.25$ ); elementary and middle schools, which do not have a graduation rating, need 21 points for ( $21/4=5.25$ ). This would usually require a majority of ratings of 5 or more in two consecutive years.
  - ✓ Like the “inner” cells of the matrix, any “averaged” cell with a 2-year average of 6.0 or better would receive recognition with “honors.”

The number of schools and districts that receive recognition depends on the criteria described in Table 2. If the Board wanted to increase or decrease the amount of recognition provided, it could either change the criteria in Table 2 or change the cut points for recognition. Changes in the criteria in Table 2 would also affect the index scores for districts and schools. The Board could also request that a more formal “standard-setting” process take place to confirm or adjust the criteria used in Table 2.

The Board could establish additional criteria in order for a school/district to receive recognition. For example, the Board could require that recognition be given only if the achievement gap (e.g., between genders or between various groups of students) was decreasing. It could also require a closer analysis of the data before a school/district receives recognition with honors to ensure data problems (in their favor) or other factors are not responsible for very high ratings. This would prevent inappropriate designations that could undermine the accountability system.

A number of issues still need to be resolved related to the recognition. This includes what benefits accrue when a school or district meets the recognition criteria. The consequence

could be as simple as highlighting the results on a Web site and issuing a press release about the winners. It could also generate financial rewards in certain cases. Another issue is what happens when a school and district are one in the same. The Board would need to make sure that any recognition is not duplicative (e.g., issuing a banner or financial reward for both the school and the district). Further, the Board could create other types of recognition, such as special recognition for a few outstanding schools/districts and some that could be competitive in nature (e.g., require nominations or applications). Finally, the proposed recognition should be integrated with existing awards being given by OSPI. It currently gives recognition through federal and state programs.

- **Federal Awards**

- ✓ *Blue Ribbon Schools* are nominated by OSPI and selected by the U.S. Department of Education based on high academic performance. In order to be selected, nominated schools must provide detailed information about their school, they can be any type of school (including private schools), and they must make AYP in the year of the nomination and the following year.
- ✓ For the *Academic Achievement Award* program, Title I Part A schools that met AYP for three consecutive years in math and/or reading can apply for recognition of improving student achievement in one or both content areas. Up to nine schools can receive an award of \$10,000. The application provides details about successful math and/or reading strategies, and these strategies are showcased at state conferences and on OSPI's website in order to assist other schools.
- ✓ For the *Distinguished Schools Award*, four Title I Part A schools are selected, two in the national category and two in the state category. Schools must apply for this award, which focuses on either exceptional student performance for two or more years or significant progress in closing the achievement gap. National award winners receive \$10,000 while state award winners receive \$5,000.

- **State Awards**

- ✓ OSPI began recognizing *Schools of Distinction* in 2007 based on improvement over an extended period of time and achievement that exceeds the state average. Only the top 5% of schools received this award.
- ✓ OSPI has been giving *Academic Improvement Awards* since 2004 to schools and district that make at least a 10% reduction in the percentage of students not meeting standard in reading, writing, and math in grades 4, 7, and 10. Wall plaques with metal plates for updates are provided to those receiving this award. In 2007, there were 1,255 schools that received a total of 2,190 awards in the three grades and subjects; 241 districts received a total of 804 awards in the three grades and subjects. OSPI does not provide any recognition or results based on how schools or districts compare to their peers.

Table 12 provides the data used in Figure 9. It shows the number and percentage of schools that would have received recognition if the proposed system were in place in 2007. Out of the 2,011 schools, the largest number of schools would have received recognition in just one or two of the 30 areas, and 348 schools (17%) would not have received any recognition. At the other extreme, 242 schools (12%) would have received recognition in 10 or more areas, and one school would have received recognition in 21 of the 30 cells of the matrix.

**Table 12: Number of Schools with Recognition, by Number of Recognitions (2007)**

Number of recognitions at a school	Number of schools	Pct of all schools	Cumulative percent
0	348	17.3%	17.3%
1	347	17.3%	34.6%
2	276	13.7%	48.3%
3	182	9.1%	57.3%
4	178	8.9%	66.2%
5	128	6.4%	72.6%
6	83	4.1%	76.7%
7	102	5.1%	81.8%
8	74	3.7%	85.4%
9	51	2.5%	88.0%
10	45	2.2%	90.2%
11	49	2.4%	92.6%
12	36	1.8%	94.4%
13	30	1.5%	95.9%
14	26	1.3%	97.2%
15	21	1.0%	98.3%
16	11	0.5%	98.8%
17	8	0.4%	99.2%
18	8	0.4%	99.6%
19	3	0.1%	99.8%
20	4	0.2%	100.0%
21	1	0.0%	100.0%

Table 13 provides the data used in Figure 10, the number and percentage of all schools that met the recognition criteria in each of the 30 areas in 2007. Reading achievement among non-low income students had the largest number of schools meeting the criteria. Only 4% had an overall average of 5.25 on the accountability index over the 2-year period. Although schools would have received recognition in a total of 8,164 cells of the matrix, this represents less than 16% of the maximum number of cells (30 cells x 460 schools with graduation rates and 25 cells x 1,651 schools without graduation rates). Roughly 57% of the recognitions would have been considered “with honor” based on schools averaging 6.0 or better. These “honor” recognitions represent less than 9% of the maximum number of cells.

**Table 13: Distribution of Schools with Recognition, by Type of Recognition (2007)**

	# of schools rated	# with Distinction	# with <i>Honors</i> Distinction	Total recognized	Pct with Distinction	Pct with <i>Honors</i> Distinction	Total Pct
Non-low income reading achievement	1,883	260	819	1,079	13.8%	43.5%	57.3%
Non-low income writing achievement	1,722	179	415	594	10.4%	24.1%	34.5%
Non-low income math achievement	1,869	107	158	265	5.7%	8.5%	14.2%
Non-low income science achievement	1,660	26	16	42	1.6%	1.0%	2.5%
Non-low income ext. grad rate	459	26	134	160	5.7%	29.2%	34.9%
Subtotal, Achievement <sup>1</sup>		598	1,542	2,140			
Low-income reading achievement	1,796	94	57	151	5.2%	3.2%	8.4%
Low-income writing achievement	1,582	61	26	87	3.9%	1.6%	5.5%
Low-income math achievement	1,789	12	7	19	0.7%	0.4%	1.1%
Low-income science achievement	1,524	2	0	2	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Low-income ext. grad rate	417	19	63	82	4.6%	15.1%	19.7%
Subtotal, Achievement <sup>1</sup>		188	153	341			
Reading among peers	1,764	118	277	395	6.7%	15.7%	22.4%
Writing among peers	1,710	138	323	461	8.1%	18.9%	27.0%
Math among peers	1,765	118	364	482	6.7%	20.6%	27.3%
Science among peers	1,681	119	370	489	7.1%	22.0%	29.1%
Ext. graduation rate among peers	325	33	68	101	10.2%	20.9%	31.1%
Subtotal, Achievement <sup>1</sup>		526	1,402	1,928			
Reading improvement	1,897	98	82	180	5.2%	4.3%	9.5%
Writing improvement	1,855	296	405	701	16.0%	21.8%	37.8%
Math improvement	1,926	165	192	357	8.6%	10.0%	18.5%
Science improvement	1,813	237	233	470	13.1%	12.9%	25.9%
Ext. grad rate improvement	446	41	60	101	9.2%	13.5%	22.6%
Subtotal, Achievement <sup>1</sup>		837	972	1,809			
Reading overall	1,935	232	41	273	12.0%	2.1%	14.1%
Writing overall	1,859	281	98	379	15.1%	2.2%	17.3%
Math overall	1,950	81	14	95	4.2%	0.7%	4.9%
Science overall	1,834	45	16	61	2.5%	0.9%	3.3%
Ext. graduation rate overall	460	67	31	98	14.6%	6.7%	21.3%
Subtotal, Achievement <sup>1</sup>		706	200	906			
Non-low income achievement overall	1,920	203	82	285	10.6%	4.3%	14.8%
Low income achievement overall	1,853	13	12	25	0.7%	0.6%	1.3%
Achievement vs peers overall	1,766	232	196	428	13.1%	11.1%	24.2%
Improvement overall	1,939	182	47	229	9.4%	2.4%	11.8%
Subtotal, Achievement <sup>1</sup>		630	337	967			
Accountability Index	2,000	63	10	73	3.2%	0.5%	3.7%
<i>Total<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>2,011</i>	<i>3,548</i>	<i>4,616</i>	<i>8,164</i>			

<sup>1</sup> Duplicated count

## APPENDIX B

### IDENTIFYING PRIORITY SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

The advisors (see Appendix D) generated a comprehensive list of quantitative and qualitative data that could be used to determine which schools in the Struggling tier should be identified as needing more significant support from the state over a longer period of time (the Priority tier). Schools in the Priority tier would have the greatest need based on consistent underperformance on multiple measures (grades, subjects, indicators) over multiple years. The advisors assumed that being in this tier would generate the opportunity for substantially more support. The following factors were initially identified (the advisors did not discuss data for identifying Priority *districts*).

#### **Contextual Data**

- Type of school (alternative school, institution)
- Changes in student demographic profile (e.g., rapid increase in low-income or ELL students)
- What programs are included in the school (e.g., concentrations of ELL, special education, gifted)
- Program changes (e.g., establishing new ELL or special education programs)
- Student mobility
- Number of languages spoken by students
- Feeder schools
- Boundary changes (closures, consolidations)
- Construction or renovation projects

#### **Analysis of Assessment Results (annual and trends over time)**

- Achievement trends over multiple years for each subject area
- Size of the gap between WASL scores in different subjects
- Size of the achievement gap
- Percent students meeting 3 of 3 and 4 of 4 standards
- Trends for subgroups (gender, race/ethnicity, low-income) and programs (ELL, special education)
- Level of growth over time
- Changes in scale scores
- Number of students who receive a “zero”
- How performance compares to similar schools
- Results of students who have been in the school for longer periods of time (track cohorts of students to see how percent meeting standard changes over time, review results for just “continuously enrolled” students, the percentage of students meeting standard the next year in the next grade compared to the previous year, e.g., the percent in grade 4 in one year compared to the percent in grade 5 the next year)
- Results from retakes (high school) and collection of evidence
- WLPT results for students from different language backgrounds, percentage of students exiting ELL program

## **AYP Results**

- Results generated with minimum Ns, confidence intervals, and continuously enrolled students (helps prevent false positives)
- How far the “all” group is from the annual goal
- Proficiency, participation, and other indicator results for all subgroups
- Number and percentage of cells not making AYP
- Which subgroups and subjects did not make AYP (ELL, special education, and participation rates count less, the all and race/ethnic groups count more)

## **Other Quantitative Data (some may only be available at the district or school levels)**

- *Graduation data:* On-time and extended graduation rates for all students and subgroups, difference in rates, percentage of students still enrolled after four years
- *Dropout data:* Annual and cohort dropout rates for all students and subgroups, difference in rates
- *Discipline data:* Number of suspensions and expulsions, source of referrals, types of infractions, types of students being disciplined the most
- *Perception results:* Surveys of staff, parents, students about school conditions and how the results differ from one another
- *Classroom conditions:* Class sizes, student/teacher ratios by grade and subject
- *Staff characteristics:* Percentage of staff with certificates, teacher education/experience levels
- *Staff turnover:* Teacher and leadership changes at school and district levels
- *District assessments:* Results from any other assessments (e.g., MAP, grade 2 reading, portfolios)
- *Volunteers:* Number of parents volunteers, how they are used
- *Retention:* Number and percentage of students retained in grade, number and type of subjects not passed, level of credit deficiency
- *Finances:* Amount generated by local levies/bonds, fund balances, amount and sources of outside funding, stability in funding over time
- *District characteristics:* Number and percentage of schools in Tier 3, percentage of district students enrolled in Tier 3 schools
- *Data anomalies:* Incorrect data reported that could affect analyses, missing data, reason for missing data, number of ratings generating the average index

## **Qualitative Data**

- *District role:* Resource amounts and types allocated to school, type of staff and programs provided, funding levels, type and intensity of interventions made to date, appropriateness of district policies, data analysis capacity, role of the district in school improvement efforts
- *Initiatives:* Number being attempted, focus and validity of initiatives, level of integration/cohesion among activities
- *Data use:* Quality of data system, capacity to use data, how information is used
- *Self-assessments:* Quality and use/implementation of school improvement plans
- *Staff relations:* Level of collaboration among staff and administrators within the school, union relations
- *Results from external reviews:* Results from accreditation and OSPI’s Comprehensive Program Review (CPR), input from ESDs

Given the comprehensive nature of this list and the limited capacity to analyze all these data for every school in the Struggling tier, the list was re-examined to determine which were the most important factors to review. Those factors appear in the body of this document.

Schools serving special populations require separate analyses. For example, schools serving high concentrations of more challenging student populations (e.g., alternative schools, institutions, those primarily serving ELL students and those with disabilities) often have low index results that would put them in the Struggling tier. These schools have great need and should not be automatically excluded from being a Priority school. A closer look into the quality of programs serving these students is needed to see if more support should be provided. These kinds of schools may require an alternative accountability system (states like Texas have set up such a system). Some institutions should be excluded (e.g., jails & detention centers) but other included (e.g., long-term psychiatric facilities).

Other types of schools may need special analyses as well. For example, results for *very small schools* ( $N < 10$ ) are available but cannot be revealed to protect confidential information about students. However, the results could still be examined for trends over time. The number of *virtual schools* is increasing, often serving home-based students who are not required to take state assessments and may not be authorized to grant diplomas, which could mean there are few or no outcomes to measure. While some of these schools will generate results, they often serve many students outside the district, which means the school's results are not included in the district results.

Certain preconditions need to exist for schools and district for them to use the additional resources effectively. For example, schools in the lowest tier need to be ready to benefit from the extra support. Without their buy-in, the chances for a successful reform are minimal. Size and location may need to be considered. If the number of schools in the Struggling tier is high and exceeds the level of resources available to support them, the state may want to require a minimum number of students per school before providing assistance to ensure cost-effectiveness of the assistance. Similarly, those identified for the Priority tier may have a wide geographic distribution. A single small school in a remote location may have the same level of need as a cluster of larger schools in a more accessible location. The state will need to determine how best to allocate its limited resources to ensure the cost effectiveness of its support. Finally, the state may want to consider providing support by geographic location to ensure equity in the distribution of the assistance.

## APPENDIX C

### CURRENT STATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has created several assistance programs to help schools and districts that have not made Adequate Yearly Progress. This appendix summarizes the two programs, one for schools and the other for districts. These programs are continually being revised to reflect the latest research on improving the education system.

#### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ASSISTANCE

The mission of OSPI's School Improvement Assistance (SIA) program is to help build capacity for districts and schools to improve student achievement through the use of the continuous school improvement model. This comprehensive model of support is unique in the United States. While many states have accountability systems that focus on rewards, punishments and takeovers, the SIA program provides comprehensive support for schools. Independent studies of the program have noted that the schools that received assistance for three years showed greater achievement gains than their respective comparison groups and the state as a whole. Nearly 60% of schools that have participated in SIA have exited federal improvement status and have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the last two years of the program. The studies found further evidence that achievement gaps have been reduced in SIA schools.

#### Program Components

- **School Improvement Facilitator (SIF):** The facilitator works with OSPI, the school district, school, and a **School Improvement Leadership Team (SILT)** to develop a plan to address identified needs and to prepare and implement a jointly developed performance agreement between the school, school district and OSPI. The school improvement facilitators are experienced educators who have been successful in improving student performance and work approximately 1.5 days a week with each school for the three years of school improvement plan development and implementation. The school improvement leadership team includes representatives from the district and school staff, parents, and community members. Additional members may include educational service district (ESD) staff, OSPI staff and students.
- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment/School Performance Review:** The needs assessment/school performance review is completed jointly by the school improvement leadership team, school district, OSPI, and a team of peer educators and experts. The school's strengths and challenges are identified and recommendations for improvement are developed. The school's curriculum, leadership, instructional practices and resources, assessment results, allocation of resources, parental involvement, support from the central office, and staff, parent, and student perceptions are examined. Student performance data, indicators from the "Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools" and the results of a review of the school's reading and math instructional practices and program, are used to identify areas to consider for improvement. The assessment/audit includes the administration of survey instruments and an on-site visit.

- **School Improvement Process, Tools, and Support:** Schools are given the necessary processes, tools and expertise for the school improvement leadership team to develop a comprehensive *School Improvement Plan*. Funds are provided to contract with individuals to assist with components of the plan, and the school improvement facilitator are responsible for organizing and facilitating meetings in coordination with school and district staff.
- **Funds for Staff Planning and Collaboration:** Funds for planning time related to the development of the school improvement plan are provided. These funds may be used to provide stipends for school improvement leadership team members. A minimum of three days must be devoted to planning time for all staff during the development of the school improvement plan. The funds can be used to pay staff stipends or to pay substitute teachers.
- **Performance Agreement:** Once the school improvement plan is completed, a two-year performance agreement is jointly developed by the school, school district and OSPI. The agreement identifies specific actions and resources the school district, the school and OSPI will commit to implement the school improvement plan. The agreement also includes a timeline for meeting implementation benchmarks and student improvement goals.
- **Implementation and Sustainability:** Tools and resources for the implementation of the performance agreement are provided during years two and three. The resources and expertise are determined on a case-by-case basis for each school, but could include such support as the provision of expertise in working with diverse student populations (e.g. special education, English language learners), funding and expertise to implement research-based practices and programs, and funding for time for staff collaboration. Schools and school districts are expected to ensure that existing funds are used effectively and to dedicate school district resources as identified in the jointly developed Performance Agreement.
- **Training Workshops:** Funds are provided to send a team of representatives to workshops during the school year to effectively plan for school improvement.
- **Professional Development:** Professional development opportunities for the school's principal and other school instructional leaders are provided in partnership with OSPI and the Association Washington School Principals (AWSP). Workshops are available during the school year.

### The Process

#### ***Year 1: School Improvement Planning and Performance Agreement***

- Conduct needs assessment through school performance review (formerly educational audit)
- Support staff training
- Develop school improvement plan/ performance agreement
- Develop student performance goals and evaluation criteria

#### ***Year 2: Implementation***

- Tools and resources to implement the school improvement plan and performance agreements
- Evaluate student progress based on goals in the agreement

#### ***Year 3: Sustainability***

- Tools and resources to build capacity and develop sustainability
- Evaluate student progress based on goals in the agreement

## DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT ASSISTANCE

OSPI has recently placed more emphasis on a systems approach in its work with districts. A special “Summit District Improvement” initiative was launched in 2008 for five districts that applied on a competitive basis. It focuses on (1) Data collection of student achievement, perception surveys, classroom observation study, transcript analysis, and college eligibility and attendance indicators; (2) a district needs analysis and action plan; and (3) school level data reports and school level alignment and implementation of the action plans.

Districts not participating in this initiative fall in four district improvement groupings: (1) New in Step 1; (2) Continuing in Step 1; (3) New in Step 2; and (4) Continuing in Step 2. The technical assistance provided to districts in improvement status varies to meet the needs of districts either as they are developing their improvement plans or in various stages of implementation of their plans. The following areas are the most common types of support.

- A. Providing a School System Resource Guide (SSIRG):** OSPI and WASA collaborated in developing a resource planning guide that supports districts as they analyze existing systems, structures, data, research findings, and more as they develop/revise their district improvement plan. A revision to the SSIRG is planned to be completed in 2008-09.
- B. Providing a Part-time, External District Improvement Facilitator:** District Improvement Facilitators are experienced educators who have been successful in improving student performance and receive continuous training through a partnership with WASA throughout the year. The selection of the facilitator is a collaborative effort between OSPI and each district. The facilitator works to help build the district’s capacity to support high-quality, data-driven, research-based district improvement efforts.
- C. Providing or Arranging for Professional Development:** Additional resources for professional development to expand capacity of district and school personnel to sustain continuous improvement focused on improvement of instruction may be provided to meet the needs of districts.
- D. Provide for a District Educational On-Site Review:** Districts can request an educational on-site review to be completed by a team of peer educators and experts. The district’s strengths and challenges are identified and recommendations for improvement are developed and provided to the district.
- E. Providing Identified Expertise:** Additional resources and expertise OSPI could provide is determined on a case-by-case basis for each district, but could include such support as expertise in working with diverse student populations (e.g., special education, English language learners), funding and expertise to implement research-based practices and programs, and funding for team collaboration time.
- F. Providing Limited Grant Money:** Districts may apply for two levels of grant support to assist in implementing one or more of the technical assistance opportunities listed A-E above.

OSPI recognizes the need to emphasize internal capacity building in districts and to revise its support systems and procedures over time.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS**

Dr. Pete Bylsma, an independent consultant and former state director of research and accountability at OSPI, was hired to help prepare the proposed index for Board review. He has been assisted by a number of advisors. This diverse set of advisors reviewed the work that had been done to date, discussed numerous technical issues related to the proposed index and recognition system, and identified data that could be used to examine schools in the Struggling tier prior to their designation as a Priority school. Other stakeholders from OSPI were included in some of the discussions, and a SBE working group that focused on System Performance Accountability also provided feedback on draft proposals.

Members of the advisory group were:

- Dr. Karen Banks, Shelton SD (District Improvement Facilitator)
- Ms. Maggie Bates, Hockinson SD (Assistant Superintendent)
- Ms. JoLynn Berge, OSPI (Federal Policy and Grant Administrator)
- Dr. Phil Dommes, North Thurston SD (Assessment Director)
- Dr. Linda Elman, Tukwila SD (Assessment/Research Director)
- Mr. Doug Goodlett, Vancouver SD (Special Services Director)
- Dr. Peter Hendrickson, Everett SD (Assessment Director)
- Mr. Lile Holland, Washington Association for Learning Alternatives (Exec. Director)
- Dr. Feng-Yi Hung, Clover Park SD (Assessment/Evaluation Director)
- Mr. David Iseminger, Lake Stevens SD (School Board)
- Ms. Randi Ivancich, Bainbridge Island SD (Teacher Specialist for Assessment)
- Dr. Nancy Katims, Edmonds SD (Assessment Director)
- Dr. Bill Keim, ESD 113 (Superintendent)
- Dr. Dennis Maguire, Pasco SD (Associate Superintendent of Instruction)
- Ms. Linda Munson, South Kitsap SD (Special Programs Director)
- Dr. Michael Power, Tacoma SD (Assistant Superintendent)
- Mr. Bob Silverman, Puyallup SD (Executive Director for Assessment)
- Ms. Nancy Skerritt, Tahoma SD (Assistant Superintendent)
- Dr. Lorna Spear, Spokane SD (Executive Director for Teaching and Learning)
- Dr. Alan Spicciati, Highline SD (Chief Accountability Officer)
- Ms. Holly Williams, Evergreen SD (School Board)

## APPENDIX E

### RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

#### **RCW 28A.305.130 Powers and duties — Purpose.**

The purpose of the state board of education is to provide advocacy and strategic oversight of public education; implement a standards-based accountability system to improve student academic achievement; provide leadership in the creation of a system that personalizes education for each student and respects diverse cultures, abilities, and learning styles; and promote achievement of the goals of RCW 28A.150.210. In addition to any other powers and duties as provided by law, the state board of education shall:

(4) For purposes of statewide accountability:

(c) Adopt objective, systematic criteria to identify successful schools and school districts and recommend to the superintendent of public instruction schools and districts to be recognized for two types of accomplishments, student achievement and improvements in student achievement. Recognition for improvements in student achievement shall include consideration of one or more of the following accomplishments:

(i) An increase in the percent of students meeting standards. The level of achievement required for recognition may be based on the achievement goals established by the legislature and by the board under (a) of this subsection;

(ii) Positive progress on an improvement index that measures improvement in all levels of the assessment; and

(iii) Improvements despite challenges such as high levels of mobility, poverty, English as a second language learners, and large numbers of students in special populations as measured by either the percent of students meeting the standard, or the improvement index. When determining the baseline year or years for recognizing individual schools, the board may use the assessment results from the initial years the assessments were administered, if doing so with individual schools would be appropriate;

(d) Adopt objective, systematic criteria to identify schools and school districts in need of assistance and those in which significant numbers of students persistently fail to meet state standards. In its deliberations, the board shall consider the use of all statewide mandated criterion-referenced and norm-referenced standardized tests;

(e) Identify schools and school districts in which state intervention measures will be needed and a range of appropriate intervention strategies after the legislature has authorized a set of intervention strategies. After the legislature has authorized a set of intervention strategies, at the request of the board, the superintendent shall intervene in the school or school district and take corrective actions. This chapter does not provide additional authority for the board or the superintendent of public instruction to intervene in a school or school district;

(f) Identify performance incentive systems that have improved or have the potential to improve student achievement.

## APPENDIX F

### STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION DRAFT ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK AND RESOLUTION

#### DRAFT ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

##### Guiding Principles

The Board is creating an accountability framework that:

- Affirms that the call for stronger accountability must be accompanied by comprehensive funding reform
- Recognizes the sense of urgency to address the needs of all our students
- Works toward a unified system of federal and state accountability
- Recognizes the critical role of local school districts in addressing continuous improvement in student achievement
- Recognizes schools and districts that have demonstrated significant learning and/or improvement by their students by identifying and rewarding best practices and exemplary work
- Advocates for the state to provide proactive support for districts to make improvement in student achievement
- Creates a new collaborative mechanism to require certain school district actions if student achievement does not improve
- Recognizes the need for support from the local community, parents, staff in the schools and districts, regional and business partners, and state officials to improve our education system for all students
- Demonstrates “your money at work” in a new basic education funding system with its focus on student achievement.

##### Key Components of the Proposed System

1. An **Accountability Index** that (a) uses criteria that are fair, consistent, transparent and easily understood, (b) provides feedback to schools and districts to self-assess their progress, and (c) identifies schools with exemplary performance as well as those that are experiencing problems.
2. **Proactive, Targeted and Intensive Voluntary Programs** that build the capacity of districts to help their schools improve student achievement. Programs offered will be tailored to the magnitude of need. As part of this system of assistance the Board will ensure that all efforts are administered as part of one unified system of state assistance including the Innovation Zone – a new effort to help districts dramatically improve achievement levels by implementing exemplary leadership and instructional practices.
3. A **Timeline for Improvement** that defines what student achievement improvement would be expected by a district.

4. **Required Action:** After the allotted time period, if there is inadequate improvement, the state will require action be taken by the relevant district(s). The collaborative process the Board envisions includes various partners with specific responsibilities.
- a) SBE will task OSPI to conduct an academic performance audit using a peer review team.
  - b) The local district, in collaboration with OSPI, will develop an improvement plan for implementation based on that review.
  - c) SBE reviews and approves the local district plan which, once approved, becomes a binding performance contract between the State and District.
  - d) Local districts will remain responsible for implementation.
  - e) OSPI will monitor the implementation of the plan and provide SBE updates.
  - f) SBE and the local school will report to the community on progress in improving student achievement.

SBE will continue to seek input from all interested parties. In January 2009, the Board plans to adopt a resolution to the legislature that states the guiding principles and key components for a new statewide accountability system that it believes needs to be a part of the revisions made to the basic education funding system. The Legislature will need to provide the Board and OSPI with the appropriate authority and resources to implement the new system. The Board will continue to refine the details of the accountability system by working with its education, parent, business and community partners.

**DRAFT SBE ACCOUNTABILITY RESOLUTION (December 23, 2008)**

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education believes that all students deserve a quality education and that there is an urgent need to strengthen a system of continuous improvement in student achievement for all schools and districts; and

WHEREAS, the legislature charged the State Board of Education to develop criteria to identify schools and districts that are successful, in need of assistance, and those where students persistently fail as well as to identify a range of intervention strategies and performance incentive systems; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education affirms the call for stronger accountability must be reciprocal between the state and local school district and accompanied by comprehensive funding reform for basic education that demonstrates “taxpayer money at work” in improving student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education will work with its education partners to create a unified system of federal and state accountability to improve student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education recognizes the need for a proactive, collaborative accountability system with support from the local school board, parents, students, staff in the schools and districts, regional educational service districts, business partners, and state officials to improve student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education believes that schools and districts should be recognized for best practices and exemplary work in improving student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education recognizes the critical role of local school boards in addressing student achievement in developing a new state accountability system as well as the need to create a new collaborative mechanism to require certain school district actions if student achievement does not improve;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the State Board of Education will develop an accountability index to identify schools and districts based on student achievement using criteria that are fair, consistent, transparent and easily understood for the purposes of providing feedback to schools and districts to self-assess their progress as well as to identify schools with exemplary performance and those with poor performance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Board of Education will work with its education partners to build the capacity of districts to help their schools improve student achievement. Programs will be offered tailored to the magnitude of need. As part of this system of assistance, the Board will ensure that all efforts are administered as part of one unified system of state assistance including the Innovation Zone – a new effort to help districts dramatically improve achievement levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that after a time set by the State Board of Education where there is no significant improvement based on the Accountability Index and other measures as defined by the Board, the district will be placed on Academic Watch and the State Board of Education will:

- Direct the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to conduct an academic performance audit using a peer review team. Based on the findings of the peer review team
- Request the local school board, in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, develop an Academic Watch Plan based on the review findings
- Review, approve, or send back for modification the local board Academic Watch plan, which once approved becomes a binding performance contract between the state and district
- Ensure that the local school board will remain responsible for implementation
- Request the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to monitor implementation of the plan and provide updates to the State Board of Education, which may require additional actions be taken until performance improvement is realized
- Report jointly to the local community with the local school board on the progress of the Academic Watch Plan
- Declare a district is not longer on Academic Watch when the Office of Superintendent reports to the Board that the district's school or schools are no longer in Priority status; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board believes this accountability framework needs to be a part of the revisions made to the basic education funding system and that the Legislature will need to provide the Board and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction with the appropriate legal authority and resources to implement and continue during its duration the new system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board will continue to refine the details of the accountability system by working with its education, parent, business and community partners over the next year.

## APPENDIX G

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLING SCHOOLS

Mass Insight, Executive Summary, December 2008

#### OVERVIEW OF THE INITIATIVE

##### *The Need*

- Like all states, Washington has a small number of schools where students persistently achieve at significantly lower levels than at peer schools.
- Also like all states, Washington has not been able to eliminate – or even to narrow, appreciably – the large achievement gap between “have” and “have-not” students and schools.
- Finally – like all states – Washington’s public schools are not yet broadly and successfully preparing most high school graduates with college and work-ready skills, after 15 years or more of standards-based reform.

##### *The Context*

- The Washington Legislature has charged the State Board of Education with developing a state system to identify Washington’s most successful and least successful public schools, and to recommend an approach to improve the latter.
- The Basic Education Funding Task Force is reviewing the state’s investments in public schools and the ways those funds are being spent, with an eye towards recommending a new funding formula capable of meeting 21<sup>st</sup>-century expectations for proficiency.
- National and Washington-based research reveals a clear set of barriers that have undercut the impact of school reform efforts to date. They include insufficient and unstable resources, insufficient time, inflexibility in allocating resources to higher need areas to improve student achievement, lack of coherent systems to recruit and prepare quality educators, insufficient coordination among intrastate agencies, and insufficient focus (i.e., with funding) on schools serving high-challenge student populations.

##### *Core Strategies*

- ***Prioritize success.*** Establish bold exemplars of systematic, comprehensive turnaround by focusing resources and capacity, rather than attempt to serve every needy school at once and, in doing so, produce inadequate results.
- Generate change by ***enabling local leaders and their partners***, rather than through state mandates and alternate governance.
- Enable local leaders to ***earn*** the opportunity to participate by insisting on ***transformation*** with this initiative, not incremental change.
- ***Hold everyone accountable***, from the state through the districts to the schools and the students.

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### *The Proposed Plan*

- Districts with Priority Schools as determined by the State Board of Education’s new Accountability Index<sup>17</sup> will have the option to apply to the Innovation Zone as one option for voluntary intensive assistance in an overall continuum of support and intervention. That continuum will be designed to provide graduated levels of assistance to schools and districts depending on their performance record (as measured by the state’s new Accountability Index) and demonstrated need.
- Districts will be admitted to the Zone after being vetted by the State Board for readiness (i.e., strong signals of commitment to transformative change) and for a solid turnaround plan. Districts will be encouraged to apply on behalf of small clusters of schools – including their Priority School(s) – organized intentionally by feeder pattern or school type (within or across district lines), so that the reforms are systemic and not limited to a focus on individual schools.
- The Zone will offer \$50,000 in planning and preliminary implementation grants to districts and a significant dollar amount per school in implementation grants for periods of up to five years, with benchmark expectations at two years (leaving Priority status) and at four years (moving into the state’s “adequate” tier of school performance). Districts will be strongly encouraged to work with a lead partner in designing and implementing their Zone initiative.
- Districts with Zone initiatives will maintain good standing and continue to receive support so long as a) their Priority Schools meet the benchmark expectations or b) they can develop a revised plan that addresses analysis of the reasons for continued under-performance.
- **Other Options for Intervention:** Districts with Priority Schools that do not join the Zone’s first cohort, either because they elect not to apply or because their proposal was deemed inadequate by the State Board, will participate in one of two other options open to them: OSPI’s comprehensive district reform initiative (also called Summit Districts), or a school turnaround initiative designed and implemented with minimal state assistance (which we call the Consulting Assistance model in this proposal).
- **Academic Watch:** Across all three of these options, districts whose Priority Schools are not able to leave that status after two full implementation years will be placed on Academic Watch for further review and action. OSPI and newly formed Peer Review Teams will consider a range of options tailored to local conditions to help those districts raise student achievement in their Priority Schools. Academic Watch can be regarded as the academic corollary, in some ways, to the state’s current Financial Watch approach with districts that need help reorganizing and managing their finances. It is the state’s “backup plan” for schools and districts that do not improve even after other strategies and resources have been applied. While it provides for a stronger state role in analyzing the lack of progress and collaborating with districts to define new turnaround strategies, it preserves the principle of local control that lies at the heart of Washington State’s system of public education.

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<sup>17</sup> The State Board of Education is developing a state accountability index, with the intention of requesting the U.S. Department of Education to substitute the new state accountability index for the current federal system under No Child Left Behind.

## *Basic Definitions*

- **The Innovation Zone is:**

- **At the instructional level**, a chance for educators to ask fundamental questions about what it takes to help high-challenge, high-poverty students succeed, and to reshape their approach accordingly based on research conducted nationally and in Washington State.
- **At the systems level**, an opportunity for district and community leaders and their partners, supported by the state, to re-imagine and rebuild the structures and operating habits that shape the nature and quality of the education they offer.
- **At the policy level**, an effort to pilot the next generation of standards-based reform in Washington State – an approach marked by greater degrees of accountability by *every* stakeholder in the enterprise.

- **The Innovation Zone is not:**

- Simply an effort to fix some broken schools.
- An initiative to distribute the available resources evenly across every challenged public school.
- A top-down, mandated state program.

## *The Rewards of Taking Action*

- The most important goal, of course, is student achievement. In addressing the needs of its most highly challenged schools, Washington State will also be targeting its resources in the communities with the highest concentrations of poverty. Erasing the poverty and racial achievement gaps has been called the most important civil rights issue of our time.
- There is a strategic benefit in acting now. The reauthorization of No Child Left Behind will likely produce extensive federal investment in school intervention strategies. Some of these funds likely will be competitive. States with robust, transformative strategies in place – such as the Washington State Innovation Zone – will be among the readiest recipients of those competitive federal funds.