

## Accountability Index FAQ

Updated December 2010

### 1. Are schools measured by variables other than statewide assessment scores?

Yes. Scores for reading, writing, math, and science are included. However, data for extended graduation rates are also included in the Index calculations .

### 2. Why are there separate indicators? Why not just measure how a school does for all students?

There are four indicators: achievement by students who are not from low income families, achievement by students from low income families, achievement vs. a school's "statistical peers," and improvement from the previous year. Looking only at how all students do in just one way doesn't provide precise data for subgroup performance, improvement over time, and peer comparison. By providing more thorough and comprehensive data, the accountability index presents a clear picture of a school's performance.

### 3. What do the numbers 1-7 signify?

Each cell of the matrix is rated on a 7-point scale (from 1 to 7). 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**, ranging from 1.0 to 7.0. The higher the Index, the better the level of performance of the school/district. See the table below for more information.

### 4. How are Achievement vs. Peers and Improvement calculated?

A *Learning Index* is used to calculate Achievement vs. Peers and Improvement.

The *Achievement vs. Peers* measure is determined by predicting the average level of achievement that would occur in schools and districts with similar student characteristics – that is, similar percentages of students who are from low-income families, are English language learners, are highly mobile, or who are in special education or gifted programs. Ratings are based on how far a school or district is above or below the predicted level.

The Learning Index measures Achievement vs. Peers in reading, writing, math, and science. This index is based on the percentage of students who score at each proficiency level on Washington's standards-based tests:

- 4 = exceeds standards
- 3 = meets standards
- 2 = partially meets standard
- 1 = well below standard

The Learning Index averages all the student results. The Learning Index ranges from 0 to 4 and is similar to a grade point average. Thus, if a school's Learning Index is *above what is predicted* by .20 (similar to a difference in grade point average of 2.50 and 2.70), the school receives a rating of

7. This score recognizes that the school outperformed those with similar student characteristics. Scores in the middle of the range (-.05 to .05) show that a school or district is performing on par with peers with similar student characteristics. Scores at the bottom of the range indicate that a school or district has fallen behind its peers.

A distinctive feature of the Learning Index is that it includes a measure for students who *exceed standards*. In the current federal AYP system, there is no recognition or reward for having students meet the highest level of achievement.

The Learning Index is also used to measure “*Improvement*.” The score is the amount of change that took place in the Learning Index from the previous year. Higher ratings are given when the Learning Index increases, and lower ratings are given when they decline.

	READING	WRITING	MATH	SCIENCE	EXT. GRAD. RATE <sup>1</sup>
<b>ACHIEVEMENT (NON-LOW INCOME)</b>	<u>% MET STANDARD</u>				<u>RATE</u>
	<u>RATING</u>				<u>RATING</u>
	90 - 100% .....7				> 95 .....7
<b>ACHIEVEMENT (LOW INCOME)</b>	80 - 89.9% .....6				90 - 95% .....6
	70 - 79.9% .....5				85 - 89.9% .....5
	60 - 69.9% .....4				80 - 84.9% .....4
	50 - 59.9% .....3				75 - 79.9% .....3
	40 - 49.0% .....2				70 - 74.9% .....2
	< 40% .....1				< 70% .....1
<b>ACHIEVEMENT VS. PEERS<sup>2</sup></b>	<u>DIFFERENCE IN LEARNING INDEX</u>				<u>DIFFERENCE IN RATE</u>
	<u>RATING</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 (change from the previous year)</b>	<u>CHANGE IN LEARNING INDEX</u>				<u>CHANGE IN RATE</u>
	<u>RATING</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 regular state tests and the alternate assessments (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 five student characteristics beyond a school’s control: the percentage of low-income, ELL, special education, gifted, and mobile students. (Mobile students are those who are not continuously enrolled from October 1 through the entire testing period.) Scores are the difference between the actual and predicted levels of the Learning Index. Scores above 0 are “beating the odds” and negative scores are below the predicted level. Separate analyses are conducted for schools for each type of school (elementary, middle,

high, multiple grade levels). District calculations also control for current expenditures (adjusted for student need).

5. Does this new accountability index replaced the AYP matrix?

No. Washington will continue to use the AYP matrix to identify schools for voluntary and required action.

However, we are seeking a uniform state and federal system and will advocate for the use of our accountability index through the reauthorization process of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

6. Why make a distinction between low-income and non-low income performance?

There is a strong correlation between a student's socio-economic background and academic performance. Comparing how students from these two sub-groups perform will enable schools to better chart their success in closing the achievement gap.

7. Why aren't the results of the various ethnic groups included in the Index?

A separate matrix of data for the various racial/ethnic groups will be made available using the same rules used by the Accountability Index. We will complete this for the 2010 statewide assessment.

8. Do the Index results reflect the type of students who attend the school?

No. Great care was taken to ensure the results do not reflect the socio-economic status (SES) of a school's student population. Many high poverty schools achieve high index scores because they score well on the improvement and peers indicators. Some have found ways to help their low income students perform well, which further helps their Index score. Of the schools being recognized for Overall Outstanding Performance, many have more than half their students living in low income homes. The correlation between the Index results and a school's economic status is relatively low -- we cannot predict a school's Index score by looking just at its poverty level.

9. Will it be difficult for a high performing school to improve its Index score?

No. Some high SES schools still show improvement and outperform their peers. The improvement indicator is based on change in the Learning Index from the previous year. This separate index reflects change across the entire range of performance levels. So when higher performing schools move students from Level 3 to Level 4, they get credit for the improvement. (Likewise, moving a student from Level 1 to Level 2 reflects improvement as well.)

10. Why do some schools in wealthy communities have relatively low Index scores?

Some schools in wealthier communities do not perform well on the improvement, peers, and low income indicators. These schools cannot depend on the performance of their non-low income students to get a good Index score because these students represent only one of the four indicators. These schools need to keep improving and help their low income students achieve at higher levels in order to get a better Index score in the future.

11. How do I read the [accountability index data](#)?

The [online excel](#) chart provides a deeper analysis of the index data. The accountability index matrix contains twenty cells.

	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Ext Grad	Averages
Indicator 1 NonLowInc	<AB-AE>	All other cells in this region follow the AB-AE format				(S)
Indicator 2 Low Inc						(T)
Indicator 3 Peers						(U)
Indicator 4 Improvement						(V)
Averages----->	(W)					(X)

**Performance, Part One**

	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
School Name	Total Avg	Non Low Inc Avg	Low Inc Avg	Peers Avg	Imprv Avg	Reading Avg	Writing Avg	Math Avg	Science Avg	ExGrad Avg
Goody Elementary	4.44	3.75	3.00	5.50	5.50	4.75	5.75	4.00	3.25	N/A

- Column: R: This is the two-year overall performance score for the school.
- Columns: S-V The two-year average for each sub-group, which includes the independent scores for reading, writing, math, science, and extended graduation rate.
- Columns: W-AA The two-year average score in individual assessment areas, which includes the scores for non-low income and low income students, as well as the performance compared to peers and the improvement index (both based on the Learning Index, see question four above).

**Performance, Part Two**

	AB	AC	AD	AE
School Name	Reading Non Low Inc Rate	Total N reading Non Low Inc	Reading Non Low Inc Met	Reading Non Low Inc Met %
Goody Elementary	5	139	120	86.33

Columns: AB-BJ The [excel file](#) then offers the rating based on the number of students taking a specific state assessment and the number of students that met standard in that assessment, resulting in the percentage meeting standard. This is how the index numbers were derived.

**Performance, Part Three**

	BN	BM
School Name	ReadingPeersRate	PeersReadResidual
Goody Elementary	5	0.09

Columns: BN-CG: The final columns of the excel chart offer a comparison for a how a given school compares to its peers. The residual is the distance from the predicted level in the peers analysis. A positive number is beating the odds, a negative number is under-performing. Ratings are given based on how far above or below the predicted level a school performs on the Learning Index. Hence, in this example, a +.09 generates a reading peer rating of 5. In other words, the Reading Learning Index for that school was .09 higher than the predicted level.