

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT GROUPS

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The No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) requires accountability for nine groups of students in reading, math, and one more indicator.¹ Accountability for performance at the student group level is widely viewed as a positive feature of the law. This document presents recommendations for a different way the state can hold schools and districts accountable for performance of various student groups and for making decisions about Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) based on those results. The recommended system is consistent with the guiding principles established by the State Board of Education, and it reflects the same concepts used in the Accountability Index. However, the recommendations cannot be implemented until the U.S. Education Department approves it through either a waiver or through the reauthorization of NCLB that allows this system.

1. Hold the “All” group accountable using the Accountability Index.

Recommendations:

- The Accountability Index matrix is unchanged (no subgroups are added to the matrix).
- There must be at least 4 rated cells in the matrix when making AYP decisions (schools with fewer than 4 rated cells must submit an improvement plan to OSPI for review).
- *Schools and districts with a 2-year average Accountability Index below 3.00 AND an index that declines two years in a row do not make AYP.*

Impact of recommendations on schools (2009)

	School Type				
	All Types	Elem	Middle	High	Multiple levels
Total Schools with 2 years of data	2,009	1,046	360	362	241
Schools with < 4 rated cells	61	1	0	24	36
Pct. excluded from analysis	3.0%	0.1%	0.0%	5.5%	14.9%
Rated Schools (Subtotal)	1,948	1,045	360	338	205
Schools not making AYP in All group¹	311	168	52	55	36
Pct. of all schools	15.5%	16.1%	14.4%	15.2%	14.9%
Pct of subtotal	16.0%	16.1%	14.4%	16.3%	17.6%

¹School had at least 4 rated cells each year, a 2-yr average index < 3.00, and the index did not improve in either year.

Rationale: Using the Index for AYP provides consistency in the accountability measure, simplicity of the matrix is maintained, and the required level is easy to understand and identifies a reasonable number of schools.²

¹ The nine groups are “all” students, five race/ethnic groups, two program groups (students with disabilities and English language learners), and students from low income families. In Washington, the unexcused absence rate is the additional indicator at the elementary and middle school levels, and the extended graduation rate is the additional indicator for high schools.

² If the Index level is lowered from 3.00 to 2.90, the number of schools not making AYP would stay the same.

2. Hold more “subgroups” accountable and make AYP decisions using subgroup results from a separate modified matrix.

Recommendations:

- Continue reporting all subgroup results for each grade (the current state practice).
- Add two more subgroups (Pacific Islanders, multi-racial) for a total of 10 subgroups.
 - 7 race/ethnic groups: American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, White, multi-racial
 - 3 other groups: students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), low income³
- Continue using the same measures used to compute the Accountability Index (i.e., results for all grades are combined, minimum N of 10 students, no margin of error, percent meeting standard is used for achievement indicator, Learning Index is used for the peers and improvement indicators, same rating system).
- Use only the outcomes now used for federal accountability—reading, math, and the extended graduation rate—and combine the two income-related indicators to compute a “row average” rating for each subgroup.
- For students with disabilities, there is no restriction on the percentage of students who meet standard on the Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS), and students are considered meeting standard if they perform as described in their individualized educational program (IEP).⁴
- A school/district does not make AYP if any row average declines two years in a row.

The example below shows the 2009 results for a hypothetical high school with at least 10 students in each subgroup (very few schools have at least 10 students in every group). Ratings are based on the performance of each group in three outcomes (reading, math, extended graduation) and three indicators (achievement of all students, achievement vs. peers, and improvement).⁵ In this example, six groups had a row average less than that in 2008. If the row average in 2010 declines again for any of these groups, the school would not make AYP in that group. Colors are used to highlight ratings that are better or worse than the previous year.

2009 RESULTS, HYPOTHETICAL HIGH SCHOOL

2009 Subgroup	READING			MATH			EXT. GRAD. RATE			Average rating	Change from previous year
	(all st.)	Peers	Improve.	(all st.)	Peers	Improve.	(all st.)	Peers	Improve.		
American Indian	4	4	4	1	5	4	1	4	4	3.44	0.33
Asian	6	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	6	4.78	0.56
Pacific Islander	4	4	4	1	5	4	1	4	4	3.44	0.22
Black	3	3	3	1	3	5	1	3	2	2.67	-1.00
Hispanic	3	4	4	1	4	4	1	4	4	3.22	-0.11
White	5	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	3.78	-0.22
Multi-racial	4	4	4	2	4	4	2	4	4	3.56	-0.22
Special education	2	4	4	1	4	4	1	2	1	2.56	-1.22
ELL	1	5	5	1	4	4	1	3	3	3.00	-0.11
Low income	4	5	5	1	5	4	1	4	4	3.67	0.22
Average	3.60	4.10	4.20	1.60	4.20	4.10	1.70	3.60	3.60	3.41	-0.16

NOTE: Ratings in **red** are less than the previous year, ratings in **green** are more than the previous year.

³ The preferred approach is to have students with disabilities and ELLs be held accountable through IDEA and Title III. If the U.S. Education Department requires these two groups to be used to make AYP decisions, both groups should include those who have exited the program.

⁴ Current federal regulations allow districts to count only 1% of their students as meeting standard using the WAAS portfolio, even if a greater percentage pass the assessment. The regulations also do not allow students with disabilities to count as meeting standard if they pass a test at a lower grade than their assigned grade, even if a student’s IEP requires it. (For example, a student with a disability in 6th grade may have an IEP that requires taking the 4th grade reading test, but the student would not be considered meeting standard if he/she passes that test.) Finally, students whose IEP calls for them to reach Level 2 on the state test will be considered meeting standard and be coded that way in the Learning Index.

⁵ The current AYP system requires the use of unexcused absence rates at the elementary and middle school levels. Data for these rates are not included because they are not part of the index system, and nearly all schools meet the required goals.

Rationale: This approach keeps the system simple and aligned with the current Index measures, provides detailed information to look at performance and improvement from each group's baseline, provides more complete and unaltered results, relies on multiple cells when computing row average to reduce fluctuations in averages from year to year, and treats every group with equal weight regardless of the size of the group.

3. Create an alternate method to make AYP for the ELL group by tying the results of the Washington Language Proficiency Test (WLPT) to the content assessments.

- *A school/district does not make AYP if the percentage of ELLs in WLPT Levels 2 and 3 who are on track to meet standard when reaching proficiency in English declines two years in a row.*⁶

Rationale: OSPI has developed a method to calculate the percentage of ELLs who are on track to meet the content standard when they become proficient in English. ELLs should be counted in WLPT Level 1 for only one year to provide an incentive to help new ELLs as much as possible. This alternative method is a fairer way to hold this group accountable because it emphasizes improvement in both English proficiency and academic performance and considers English language ability when examining students' performance in the academic subjects.

4. Revise the rules for moving in and out of "Improvement" status to reflect common sense practices.

- Schools/districts not making AYP for the same reason (e.g., same subgroup) in consecutive years move into "improvement" unless there is a compelling reason not to, based on the results of a deeper review.
- If the reason for not making AYP is due to the performance of a different group than a group responsible for not making AYP in the previous year, the school/district does not move to the next step of the process.
- School choice and supplemental educational services must be made available to the students in the subgroup(s) whose results are responsible for the school not making AYP. (Currently it applies to all students in the school, even if they are in a group that has performed well.)
- Those in improvement status that make AYP move back a step (e.g., from Step 2 to Step 1). Those making AYP two years in a row exit improvement status.

Rationale: The above rules reflect common sense rules related to school and district improvement. Consequences should be applied based on the results of under-performing groups, resources should be focused on groups that are not being well served in a logical order, and fewer consequences should be imposed when improvement occurs.

⁶ OSPI has developed a method to calculate this percentage. This alternative method is a better way to hold this group accountable because it emphasizes improvement in both English proficiency and academic performance.