

## **Summary of Accountability Recommendations for**

- **English Language Learners (ELLs)**
- **Alternative Schools**
- **Recognition**

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Three accountability issues have been discussed with various stakeholders during the past three months: (1) how to count the results of English language learners (ELLs) in the accountability index, (2) how to hold alternative schools accountable, and (3) how to recognize schools and districts using the Accountability Index data. This paper summarized the results of those discussions and presents the recommended approach to each. These recommendations reflect the views provided by the stakeholders. More details on each issue are provided in separate documents.

### **COUNTING RESULTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)**

Federal accountability regulations (NCLB) require states to include the reading and math results of ELLs who are in their second year of enrollment in a U.S. public school, regardless of their English ability, when determining adequate yearly progress (AYP). Most stakeholders believe this requirement leads to invalid accountability results and forces schools to use unethical testing practices. To increase the validity of federal accountability results, OSPI repeatedly requested that ELL test results not be included during a student's first three years of enrollment in a U.S. public school or until the student achieves an advanced level of English proficiency (Level 3) on the Washington Language Proficiency Test (WLPT), whichever comes first. More recently, OSPI proposed using the ELL results in the second year of U.S. enrollment when determining AYP, but the definition of proficiency would be based on a "sliding scale" according to a student's level of English proficiency as measured on the WLPT. The U.S. Education Department has denied OSPI's requests to use both policies.

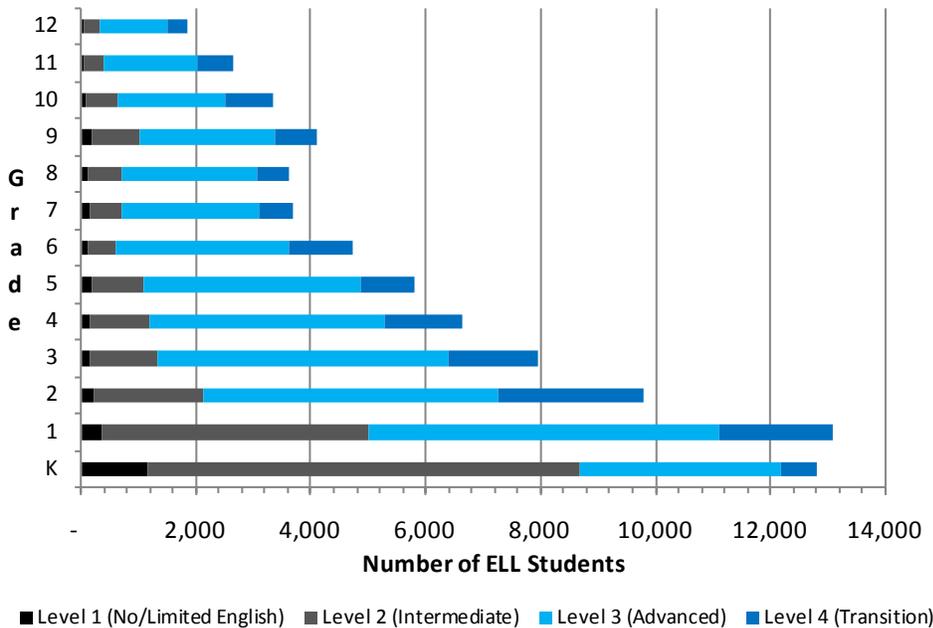
Various stakeholder groups and technical advisors discussed how best to use ELL results when calculating the Accountability Index. They considered the merits and disadvantages of both of the above approaches—the "extended exemption" and the "sliding scale"—as well as other options. Both approaches produced a very small positive impact on the index results.<sup>1</sup> While the effect of both approaches is small, the minor gains are nevertheless important to educators who support a new approach to increase the fairness and validity of accountability results. While there was support for both approaches, ultimately a majority of stakeholders preferred using the "extended exclusion" approach because it is simpler to understand and communicate. It is also consistent with OSPI's request to the U.S. Education Department and with empirical evidence on the amount of time it takes ELLs to acquire language skills and meet state standards. Moreover, the 3-year exclusion does not exclude many ELL results because (a) most ELLs have been enrolled for 3

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<sup>1</sup> Analyses of a district with a high level of ELL students found that both methods improved the percentage of non-low income students meeting standard in the various content areas by 1 percentage point and the percentage of low income students meeting standard by about 7 percentage points (ELL students are more likely to be low income). The overall index for this district improved by 0.1 on a 7-point scale using both methods.

years by the time they first take a state assessment in grade 3, and (b) most ELLs in grades 3-10 have achieved advanced level on the WLPT (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: WLPT Results in 2008, by Grade and Language Proficiency Level**



Stakeholders were unanimous in wanting OSPI to provide more information about the performance of ELLs. Currently, OSPI reports no WLPT results for the state, districts, or schools on the Report Card, even though they are available. OSPI recently used new methods to estimate the WASL scale score needed by ELLs to be “on track” to meet standard when they acquire English proficiency. Stakeholders saw great value in having this kind of information available. These and the other WLPT results would be used in OSPI’s annual evaluation of the state program, and they would be reviewed as part of the analysis of schools and districts that do not make AYP two years in a row.

Three recommendations emerged from the stakeholder conversations.

1. WASL/WAAS results should be excluded from the accountability calculations for ELLs who are in the first three calendar years of U.S. public school enrollment or until Level 3 is reached on the WLPT, whichever comes first.
2. WLPT results should be made public on OSPI’s on-line Report Card.
3. OSPI should provide information to help districts and school know if ELLs are on track to meet standard based on their WLPT and WASL results.

<sup>2</sup> 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 advanced level of the WLPT in 2008 and would have their scores included in the accountability calculations.

## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Many types of alternative schools exist in the state.<sup>3</sup> 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 alternative schools offer special programs for students who are not at-risk and who must meet rigorous academic requirements for admission. In addition, some are considered “alternative” because they do not use a normal school approach (e.g., digital learning, Parent Partnership Programs, programs offered by independent contractors or held on college campuses).

The wide variation in the focus, structure, and clientele of alternative programs poses unique accountability challenges. Their results are included in district results, but school-level outcomes may be very high or low, depending on the type of students served. As a result, no “peer” indicator is computed for these schools when calculating the accountability index. Most of these schools are relatively small—their total 2007 enrollment was less than 4% of enrollment statewide—but many serve student populations facing significant challenges. Alternative schools also frequently have very high mobility rates. Alternative schools, therefore, are over-represented in the Struggling tier: about 25% of all schools with an alternative school designation had a 2-year index average that placed them in the Struggling tier in 2008.

The Washington Association for Learning Alternatives (WALA) has compiled research on best practices among alternative schools. Findings from this research and from studies on effective schools provide a framework to hold alternative schools accountable. In addition, OSPI is collecting more information that will help educators and stakeholders understand outcomes in alternative (and other) schools. For example, it has created a database of students who achieve the Certificate of Academic Achievement via state-approved alternatives to the WASL. It has also begun collecting dropout recovery data and will soon collect data on student credits and courses that will allow for analyses of credits earned.

Stakeholders believe these schools should not be exempt from the normal accountability measures, but that they also require a different kind of analysis if they consistently do not make AYP. Specifically, two recommendations emerged from the stakeholder conversations.

1. Accountability for alternative schools should begin using the approach used for all schools. Each would receive an index score using the normal process (assignment of ratings using the same benchmarks, averaging the rating).
2. For alternative schools not making AYP two years in a row or in school improvement, a deeper analysis should examine existing data as well as factors related to best practices.

The deeper analysis conducted by OSPI would include recommendations about areas where improvement needs to occur in the future. If an alternative school does not make AYP again the following year, the areas that needed improvement would be the main focus on the deeper analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> “Alternative school” is a generic term referring to any school that is not identified as a regular school in the OSPI database. This includes alternative schools, ELL and special education centers, psychiatric facilities, private schools on contract, and long-term correctional institutions. It does *not* include tribal schools. Jails and juvenile detention centers are not authorized to give assessments, so they are excluded from accountability decisions.

## RECOGNITION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature requires SBE to “adopt objective, systematic criteria” to identify schools and districts for recognition and for receiving additional state support. The SBE accountability system uses a 20-cell matrix that measures five outcomes in four ways, as shown in Table 1. The results for the cells are rated on a scale of 1 to 7 (see Appendix A). The ratings are averaged to create the Accountability Index. Averages for the outcomes and indicators are also computed to provide more feedback to educators.

**Table 1: Matrix of Accountability Measures**

INDICATORS	OUTCOMES					Average
	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Ext. Grad. Rate	
Achievement of non-low income						
Achievement of low income						
Achievement vs. peers						
Improvement from previous year						
<i>Average</i>						<i>INDEX</i>

Several principles guided the development of the recognition system. The system should (1) be transparent and simple to understand, (2) rely mainly on criterion-referenced measures, and (3) provide multiple ways to demonstrate success. Based on stakeholder feedback, **two forms of recognition should be given: “Outstanding Overall Performance” and “Noteworthy Performance.”** Other forms of recognition could be given as well based on index data.

### Outstanding Overall Performance (8 types)

SBE should provide recognition based on high levels of performance in the index, each of the five outcome areas, and for closing the achievement gaps (i.e., only a small difference between non-low income and low income ratings in all subjects). To ensure only truly outstanding performance is recognized, schools and districts should meet the following conditions.

- (a) For the **index**, the 2-year average must be at least 5.50, at least 10 cells of the matrix are rated each year, and there must be fewer than 10% students designated as gifted each year.
- (b) For **reading, writing, math, science**, and the **extended graduation rate**, the overall (column) 2-year average must be at least 6.00, at least 2 of the 4 cells in the column must be rated each year, and there must be fewer than 10% students designated as gifted each year.
- (c) For the **achievement gap**, there must be at least 10 students in at least 2 of the 5 outcomes (columns) in both of the income-related cells (non-low income and low income), there can be no rating of 1 in any income-related cell or peer cell, there can be no more than a 1-point difference in the rating between the two income-related cells,<sup>4</sup> and there must be fewer than 10% students designated as gifted each year. Each of the above criteria must be met two years in a row.

<sup>4</sup>For example, if the reading non-low income cell is rated 5, the reading low-income cell could be rated no lower than 4 and no higher than 6.

(d) For **schools with gifted programs**, the top 5% of schools in grade band—elementary, middle, high, and multi-level—that have at least 10% gifted students would receive this type of recognition, based on the 2-year average peer ratings in all four subjects.<sup>5</sup>

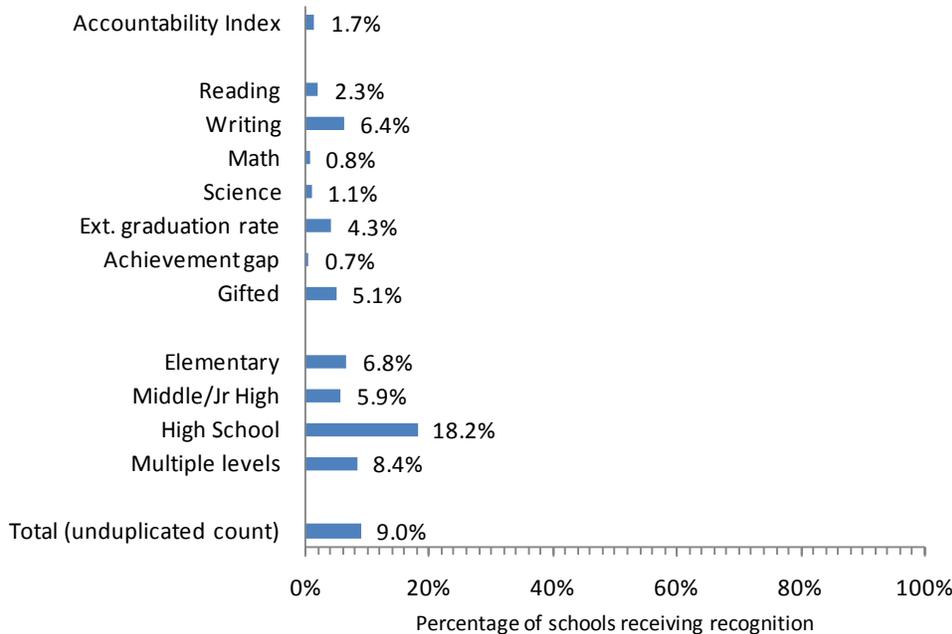
Table 2 shows the cells of the matrix that would be recognized. Figure 2 shows the percentage of schools that would have been recognized if it were in effect in 2008. Recognition would have been given to 191 different schools (9% of all schools) in a total of 277 areas (some schools would have received recognition in more than one area). Very few schools would have received recognition in math, science, the index, or for having closed the achievement gap.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2: Areas of Recognition for Outstanding Overall Performance**

INDICATORS	OUTCOMES					Average
	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Ext. Grad. Rate	
Achievement of non-low income	Compare the two income-related cells to each other in each column, must have no more than a 1-point difference in each column					
Achievement of low income						
Achievement vs. peers						Gifted*
Improvement from previous year						
Average	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	5.50

\* The two-year average applies only to the four content areas (not the extended graduation rate).

**Figure 2: Percentage of Schools Meeting “Outstanding Overall Performance” Criteria (2008)**



<sup>5</sup>Results for the peer indicators control for the types of students attending the school (the percent gifted, low income, ELL, special education, and mobile). This ensures schools with the highest concentrations of gifted students so not automatically receive this form of recognition.

<sup>6</sup>The uneven results occur because recognition is given based on a set of criteria rather than on a percentage basis (a norm-referenced approach) and because of differences in the relative difficulty of the assessments.

Noteworthy Performance (21 types)

OSPI should consider providing recognition to schools and districts for each of the 20 cells of the matrix when the 2-year average for a cell is at least 5.50, and for the index when the 2-year average is at least 5.00. To receive this type of recognition, schools and districts should also meet the following conditions:

- (a) No rating below 5 can occur in either year in the 20 cells of the accountability matrix.
- (b) Recognition for non-low income cells in reading and writing requires a minimum 2-year average of the low income group of 4.00.

Table 3 shows the cells of the matrix that would be recognized and the minimum average. Figure 3 shows the percentage of schools that met the criteria for recognition in the 21 cells in 2008. Far more schools would have received this type of recognition because it is based on performance in each of the 20 cells of the matrix as well as the index. More than 80% of the schools statewide (1,618 in total) met the criteria in some way, and some schools would have received recognition for performance in many of the cells of the matrix. The largest number of schools (40%) met the minimum criteria for non-low income reading achievement (even when requiring the low income group to have at least a 4.0 average). Achievement in math, science, and among low-income students had far fewer schools meeting the criteria. For the index, 8% had an overall 2-year average of at least 5.00.

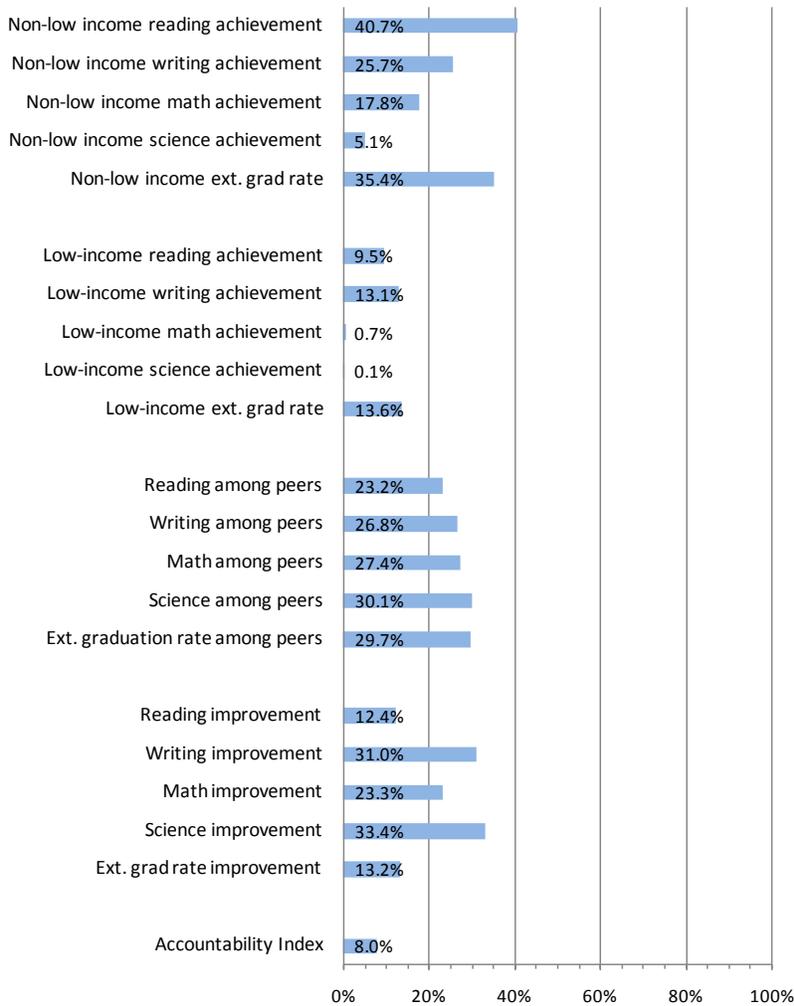
Appendix B provides more results for both types of recognition.

**Table 3: Areas of Recognition and 2-Year Average Required for Noteworthy Performance**

INDICATORS	OUTCOMES					Average
	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Ext. Grad. Rate	
Achievement of non-low income	**	**				
Achievement of low income	<b>5.50</b>					
Achievement vs. peers						
Improvement						
Average						<b>5.00</b>

\*\*Recognition in these cells requires the low-income cell to have a 2-year average of at least 4.00.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Schools Meeting “Noteworthy Performance” Criteria (2008)**



Forms and Timing of Recognition

The *Outstanding Overall Performance* award should be recognized in a significant manner, such as through a special event and banner. Relatively few schools (less than 200 statewide) reached these levels in 2008, so the extra cost will be relatively minimal. For *Noteworthy Performance*, recognition should be via a letter to the district with the names of the schools that are to be recognized and the reason for recognition. The results should also be posted on the OSPI Web site. This is the least expensive and most efficient form of recognition.

Other forms of recognition could be given by either OSPI or SBE based on their priorities. For example, OSPI could recognize a certain percentage of schools in math and science, even if they do not meet the criteria discussed above. Monetary compensation is not recommended, although matrix data could be used to generate schoolwide bonuses if the Legislature includes these as part of any law or reforms of the basic education finance system in the future.

The index can be computed retroactively using existing data, so it should be used for recognition purposes in Fall 2009. Providing recognition would be “Phase I” in the implementation of the accountability system, with full implementation contingent upon adequate funding.

## Appendix A

### Benchmarks and Ratings for Outcomes and Indicators

		OUTCOMES				
		READING	WRITING	MATH	SCIENCE	EXT. GRAD. RATE <sup>1</sup>
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>ACHIEVEMENT (NON-LOW INCOME)</b>	<u>% MET STANDARD</u> <u>RATING</u>			<u>RATE</u> <u>RATING</u>	
		90 - 100% ..... 7			> 95 ..... 7	
		80 - 89.9% ..... 6			90 - 95% ..... 6	
		70 - 79.9% ..... 5			85 - 89.9% ..... 5	
	<b>ACHIEVEMENT (LOW INCOME)</b>	60 - 69.9% ..... 4			80 - 84.9% ..... 4	
		50 - 59.9% ..... 3			75 - 79.9% ..... 3	
		40 - 50% ..... 2			70 - 74.9% ..... 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 (from previous year)</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 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 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, adjusted for student need.

## Appendix B

### Recognition Results, 2008

#### Distribution of Schools Meeting “Outstanding Overall Performance” Criteria (2008)

Type of Recognition	Elementary	Middle/ Jr. High	High	Multiple Levels	Total*
Index	27	1	1	4	33
Reading	26	3	11	4	44
Writing	29	13	62	14	118
Math	10	2	1	3	16
Science	16	4	1	0	21
Ext. Grad. Rate	—	—	10	10	20
Achievement Gap	12	0	0	2	14
Gifted	6	3	1	1	11
<b>Total*</b>	126	26	87	38	277
<b>Total**</b>	6.8%	5.9	18.2%	8.4%	9.0%

\* Duplicated count (schools can be recognized in more than one area); 19 alternative schools are included in the totals.

\*\*Based on unduplicated count of that type of school; a total of 191 schools would have been recognized.

#### Distribution of Schools Meeting “Noteworthy Performance” Criteria (2008)

	# of schools rated	Total recognized	Total percent
Non-low income reading achievement	1,841	750	40.7%
Non-low income writing achievement	1,668	428	25.7%
Non-low income math achievement	1,842	327	17.8%
Non-low income science achievement	1,636	84	5.1%
Non-low income ext. grad rate	460	163	35.4%
Low-income reading achievement	1,784	170	9.5%
Low-income writing achievement	1,536	201	13.1%
Low-income math achievement	1,785	13	0.7%
Low-income science achievement	1,522	2	0.1%
Low-income ext. grad rate	441	60	13.6%
Reading among peers	1,755	408	23.2%
Writing among peers	1,710	458	26.8%
Math among peers	1,757	482	27.4%
Science among peers	1,679	505	30.1%
Ext. graduation rate among peers	333	99	29.7%
Reading improvement	1,932	240	12.4%
Writing improvement	1,861	577	31.0%
Math improvement	1,931	449	23.3%
Science improvement	1,840	614	33.4%
Ext. grad rate improvement	453	60	13.2%
Accountability Index	1,972	158	8.0%