

Achievement & Accountability Workgroup (AAW) Recommendations to the State Board of Education Feedback Report from the October 10, 2012 AAW Meeting

Overview

Upon completion of each AAW meeting, SBE staff will generate a report of the members' discussions during that meeting. Each member had the opportunity to review and contribute to this report prior to publication.

Executive Summary

AAW members provided input on the following Index questions:

Discussion Topics	Feedback
Achievement Gap Closing Measures	Unanimous: Index should measure both growth and proficiency gaps
Career and College Readiness	Unanimous: Index should include postsecondary indicators beyond graduation rates
Weighting	Unanimous: Index should assign equal weights to all tested subjects
Improvement	Mixed: See comments below
Subgroups	Mixed: See comments below
What to keep from current Index	Ongoing discussion question: See comments below

Question 1: What performance indicator(s) should be used to measure the achievement and opportunity gap?

Options:

- A. Growth Gaps
- B. Proficiency Gaps
- C. BOTH Proficiency and Growth Gaps

Recommendation: Option C

The AAW believes that ultimate goal is proficiency for all students and recommends the revised Index include proficiency gaps: the gap between students' performance on state assessments and the proficiency standard. However, proficiency alone is not adequate as a comprehensive school measure. Additionally, proficiency gaps are a lagging indicator in that they measure student and school performance after the fact. Growth gaps, however, are a leading indicator in that they predict when or if a student will reach proficiency at his/her current rate of growth, and they tell stakeholders whether or not a student's growth rate needs to increase to reach proficiency within a specific time period. To provide a more holistic picture of students and schools, the AAW recommends the revised Index measure both proficiency and growth gaps.

Pros

1. Measuring both gives practitioners more information and is a fairer way to hold schools accountable.

Cons

1. Measuring both proficiency and growth adds complexity, and AAW members were clear that parents must be able to understand the revised Index and performance indicators.

Additional Considerations & Questions:

- How can the growth model help us demonstrate the complexity of reporting on students who make it to proficient and are no longer in the subgroup? How do we communicate that?
- Some stakeholders recommended the inclusion of non-academic indicators such as attendance, suspensions, and social/emotional development.
- Some stakeholders questioned the validity of using state assessments to measure growth and requested multiple kinds of assessment. Discussion ensued on how and what types of data sets are available.
- How does Colorado use the collected growth data? How does this data become consequentially valid? What are the policy outcomes?
- Could the Index include performance indicators that measure the legislature's funding of K-12 education? The analogy of feeding the pig and weighing the pig was used. If the only measures are weighing the pig, then we are missing a significant part of getting the pig to grow. The legislature has set out timelines for funding things like all day K and K-3 class size reduction where graphs similar to the AMO's could easily be created. A significant part of closing the achievement/opportunity gap must come from a rational and ample funding system which can only be created at the state level by the legislature.

Question 2: What performance indicator(s) should be used to measure career and college readiness?

Options:

- A. High School Graduation Rates ONLY
- B. High School Graduation Rates PLUS sub-indicators of career and/or college readiness

Recommendation: Option B

The AAW recommends the revised Index include both high school graduation rates and additional sub-indicators of career and/or college readiness.

Pros

1. Additional indicators give us a better understanding of how effective our system is.

Cons

1. Deciding which sub-indicators to include poses the challenge of achieving a common understanding of career and college readiness.

Additional Considerations & Questions:

- What do our school districts do to build career and college readiness in lower grades? What do other states do?
- What years will we count for graduation rates – 4, 5, 6, or 7?
- Do we have enough valid and reliable data to measure career and college readiness?
- How will Collections of Evidence and other alternative assessments fit into the Index?

Question 3: What, if any, performance indicators should be used to measure improvement?

Options:

- A. Improvement from prior year in percent of students meeting standard.
- B. Improvement from prior year in growth.
- C. Improvement from prior year in percent of students meeting standard using the Learning Index.
- D. None of the above.
- E. Both B and C

Recommendation: Split between B and C

The AAW members were split on using growth or the Learning Index to measure improvement from the prior year.

Pros

1. We want to measure school and district improvement year to year.
2. The Learning Index reflects improvement at all levels of proficiency, not just students on the verge of meeting standard.
3. Improvement in the student growth rate fairly reflects the academic gains made within a school.

Cons

1. The Learning Index may be too confusing for the public.
2. Regardless of approach, this measure necessarily includes different students each year. Originally, it made sense given that we could not look at the performance of students over time. Changing school boundaries and magnet programs make this a sometimes invalid measure.

Additional Considerations & Questions:

- Use improvement for recognition but do not include it as a performance indicator in the Index
- Measure improvement by the year-to-year change in a school's overall Index score instead of measuring the change in each individual performance indicator.
- Using improvement as a basis for recognition and awards allows us to acknowledge schools without adding or subtracting points that depend on the consistency of a building's student population.

Question 4: How should tested subjects be weighted?

Options:

- A. Equal weight for all tested subjects.
- B. Weight subjects based on testing frequency.

Majority recommendation: Option A

The AAW recommends the revised Index equally weight all tested subjects.

Pros

1. All subjects are important and need to be viewed as such.

Cons

1. There are fewer data points for science and writing to gauge progress.
2. Testing infrequently can cause large changes in scores. This could have negative implications for grade/subject teachers.

Additional Considerations & Questions:

- Are there ways to measure progress between multiple tests?
- How do we measure 21st century skills?
- How do we measure growth with one test each year?
- Some stakeholders preferred to weight assessments before selecting performance indicators.
- How do we account for test refusal?
- State weights vs. local weights – what provides the most useful feedback for planning at the school level?
- How do you measure growth in science?
- How does frequency and weighting inform improvement?

Question 5: How should we disaggregate student data in the Index?

Options:

- A. Use current federal subgroups only.
- B. Use current subgroups PLUS add new subgroups – former ELL, “catch-up students,” or “lowest 25%.”
- C. Create super subgroups for schools with low N size.
- D. Both B and C.
- E. Other.

Recommendation: Split between B and C

Most of the AAW supported further disaggregation of subgroups whenever possible; however, the AAW also wanted schools to be accountable for small minority populations. Members pointed out that further disaggregation and super subgroups for schools with a small N size are not mutually exclusive. Some members strongly supported tracking both former ELLs and special education students. No clear recommendation emerged from the AAW. Staff recommend further examination and discussion.

Pros

1. For option B, the current subgroups plus additional subgroups will better reflect specific student needs
2. For Option B, adding new subgroups gives us a way to track success of students who exit the TBIP and Special Education.
3. Creating super subgroups for schools with a low N size includes more students for accountability purposes.

Cons

1. Adds complexity to tracking and reporting; we need to clearly communicate why the additional complexity is necessary.

Additional Considerations & Questions:

- Is there a way to allow schools/districts the flexibility to track specific subgroups at a local level that could roll up into the state subgroup categories? Examples were Russian American and East African American students.
- How would we decide which groups to combine into a super subgroup?
- How do we measure success of the students who reach proficiency and are no longer counted (i.e. special education students, ELLs)?
- Should (ELL and special education) subgroups be part of the accountability measure? The gap is the reason they qualify for services under that category.
- Should subgroups be counted in the “all” category?
- Mobility
- Newcomer ELLs – differentiate between educated vs. limited educational experience.
- Further disaggregate subgroups to better reflect growth and challenges (e.g. “Black” category).

Question 6: What to keep/change from the current Index?

No options provided – lunch time discussion topic. This question was asked so staff could capture what stakeholders value in the current Index. People familiar with the Index were highly encouraged to provide input, but only a few individuals opted to engage in this discussion and therefore the bullets below do not necessarily reflect the full input of the AAW.

Additional Considerations & Questions:

- Use tier labels that are more accessible to parents than a summative number.
- Keep the improved online format and build more tools and data into it.
- Place the Achievement Index tier labels on OSPI’s Report Card or have a common platform.
- Noted strengths include:
 - Fairer measure than AYP.
 - Includes all tested subjects.
 - Includes an improvement indicator.
 - Equally weights low income and non-low income students.
 - Peer group component.
- Even though USED did not approve including the peers measure, it would be helpful to continue to collect the information to identify schools doing an effective job with students from low income families.