

NCLB/Title III Rhode Island Student Proficiency Targets

Summary Description of
Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs)
For Programs Instructing English Language Learners

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Title III Accountability

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) specifies that school districts using Title III federal funds to provide educational services to English language learners (ELL students) must be measured against student performance targets. These targets are sometimes referred to as AMAOs (annual measurable achievement objectives). The concept of accountability is comparable to the NCLB accountability requirements for schools and school districts receiving federal Title I funds (compensatory education programs targeted to low-income areas). Under Title I, the terms AYP (adequate yearly progress) and AMO (annual measurable objective) are more typically used. In contrast to Title I, NCLB/Title III is an accountability reporting system for school districts but not for individual schools. However, it is beneficial for individual schools to consider the achievement and progress of ELL students relative to both Title I and Title III targets.

Type of Performance Assessed

The Title III accountability system addresses both the attainment of English language proficiency (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and academic achievement. The scope of academic achievement assessed is intended to parallel the measurement of academic achievement under NCLB/Title I, which is currently an assessment of grade level performance in English language arts (reading and writing) and in mathematics.

The Title I accountability system assesses students in grades 3-8 plus grade 11. The Title III accountability system assesses all ELL students in grades K-12 on English language proficiency and relies on data for ELL students tested in the Title I assessment system (NECAP or NSRE exams) for measuring academic attainment. The assessment system defined by NCLB/Title I is used statewide at grades 3-8 and 11 for all schools whether or not Title I funds are received. Similarly, Rhode Island applies Title III accountability targets to all school districts and independent charter schools regardless of whether Title III funds are received.

The Assessment Instruments

English language proficiency (speaking, listening, reading and writing) is assessed using the ACCESS for ELLs assessment which was administered in March 2006 and March 2007. Previous to that, the Maculaitis II (MAC II) exam was administered statewide each spring. ACCESS for ELLs is a product of the multi-state WIDA consortium and is expressly aligned to the WIDA English language proficiency curriculum (content) standards that have been adopted and disseminated in Rhode Island. The grade level academic achievement exams used under Title III (and for general NCLB school and district accountability) are the NECAP exams (New England Common Assessment Program) developed jointly with New Hampshire and Vermont. NECAP exams were first administered in October 2005 at grades 3-8. A newly developed NECAP exam for grade 11 was introduced in October 2007. This cycle of Title III evaluation is for the 2006-07 school year using the March 2007 ACCESS exam, the October 2006 NECAP assessments at grades 3-8 and the March 2007 New Standards Reference Exam (NSRE) for high schools (grade 11).

Historical Note on Conversion from MAC II to ACCESS Assessments

Both the MAC II and the ACCESS for ELLs were designed to measure English language proficiency. However, the current exam (ACCESS) is considered to be better aligned to the Rhode Island (and WIDA) English language proficiency standards. Test scores have indicated that the ACCESS is a more challenging exam than the MAC II. Among other differences ACCESS is considered to be more oriented to the language used in the various academic subject areas. The ACCESS for ELLs assessment was first administered in Rhode Island in March 2006.

Under the supervision of the WIDA multi-state consortium, a “bridge study” was done to correlate the MAC II with ACCESS. RIDE used those conversion factors as the best available indicator of English proficiency improvement during the transition year from MAC II to ACCESS. With the second administration of ACCESS (March 2007), a proficiency improvement indicator is more exactly calculated because it shows performance changes on the same assessment program (ACCESS) from March 2006 to March 2007.

AMAO Targets for the 2006-07 School Year Assessment Cycle

Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires school districts to meet specified “annual measurable achievement objectives” (AMAOs). The law specifies three conjunctive requirements (all must be achieved).

(1) **Proficiency Attainment**

ELL students must achieve English language proficiency at a satisfactory pace. The operational definition of this indicator is defined by each state. In Rhode Island, this indicator is based on performance on the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. Student proficiency on ACCESS is treated in the AMAO system as a score of 4.5 or higher on the 6 point ACCESS scale. (A special review of data has indicated that students who achieve proficiency at the 4.5 level or higher have a probability of achieving proficiency on the NECAP exams that is comparable to students in the general population.) The AMAO target stipulates that of all students in LEP services for at least three years, at least 40 percent of those students district-wide must be assessed on ACCESS as proficient.

(2) **Proficiency Improvement**

ELL students must make sufficient progress in English language proficiency. Progress is defined by each state. In Rhode Island, the MAC II assessment of English language proficiency was administered in 2004-05 to all ELL students in grades K-12. In 2005-06 a new assessment (ACCESS for ELLs) aligned to new statewide proficiency content standards was administered at grades K-12. Using a research study, MAC II scores were converted to the ACCESS scale and an average measure of growth was determined for all “matched” students – that is, students who had an assessment score for both MAC II and ACCESS. If the district-wide average growth score was at least 0.5 performance levels on the 6 point ACCESS scale, the district met the AMAO for proficiency improvement.

The same measure of proficiency improvement has been used for the 2006-07 evaluation. Improvement is measured for ELL students who have both a March 2006 and a March 2007 ACCESS score. If the district-wide average growth score is at least 0.5 performance levels on the 6 point ACCESS scale, the district has met the AMAO for proficiency improvement.

(3) **Academic Achievement**

ELL students must meet the English language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics achievement level requirements for NECAP or NSRE exams used under the NCLB/Title I portion of the law. The Department uses ELL performance as two of the 37 performance targets in determining whether districts make “adequate yearly progress” in the NCLB accountability system. Districts are evaluated separately for elementary grades, middle school grades and for high school. Results are posted annually on the RIDE website under “district report cards.” State academic testing includes grades 3-8 plus grade 11. If a district passes the Title I AYP requirement for its ELL students, it is considered to have passed the Title III AMAO requirement for academic achievement. For more detail on Title I AYP requirements, consult the 2007 Accountability Technical Bulletin on the RIDE website. (Click onto the Accountability Information tab from State Testing and Reporting on the home page.)

Additional Information

A school district is given a “pass” on an AMAO indicator if calculations would have been based on a very small number of ELL students. The rule used is that there must be at least 45 ELL students with usable data for AMAO #3 to support a reliable calculation and at least 30 students for AMAOs 1 and 2. Students in the two-year LEP – monitor period are included in all AMAO calculations. The Title III AMAO evaluation system is based on district aggregated data. Calculations are not made for individual schools.

To be included in the data pool for any of the three district AMAO evaluations, a student must have been instructed in the district for at least one year. Students who meet this criterion are then screened against any additional criteria as needed for each of the AMAOs.