

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 within larger school districts. 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 exams) for measuring academic attainment. The accountability system defined by NCLB/Title I is used statewide at all schools whether or not Title I funds are received. Similarly, Rhode Island applies Title III accountability targets to all school districts, state operated schools 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 has been administered in March 2006, March 2007 and January 2008. Previous to that, the Maculaitis II (MAC II) exam was administered statewide. 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 academic achievement exams used under Title III (and for Title I 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 2007-08 school year using the January 2008 ACCESS exam, the October 2007 NECAP assessments at grades 3-8 and 11 as well as the March 2007 ACCESS exam as a base for measuring proficiency improvement.

## **AMAO Targets for the 2007-08 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 had 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. ELL students within a school district contribute to this indicator if they have both a current English language proficiency score from the ACCESS exam and a score from the prior year. Thus, the analysis is only done using “matched” students. Combining these matched students, if the district-wide average growth score was at least 0.5 performance levels on the 6 point ACCESS scale, the district has met the AMAO for proficiency improvement. In the evaluation for the 2007-08 school year, improvement is measured for ELL students who have both a March 2007 and a January 2008 ACCESS score. On an annualized basis, 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. However, because testing was done in January instead of March this year (2008), a proficiency improvement score of 0.44 or higher is accepted as meeting the improvement target.

**(3) Academic Achievement**

ELL students must meet the English language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics achievement level requirements for NECAP under the NCLB/Title I portion of the law. The Rhode Island Department of Education uses ELL performance as two of the 37 performance targets in determining whether districts make “adequate yearly progress” in the NCLB Title I accountability system. In the Title I 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 2008 Accountability Technical Bulletin on the RIDE website. (Click onto the Accountability Information tab from NECAP Test Results on the home page.)

## **District Title III Classification Labels**

Districts which do not miss any of the three AMAO targets are listed as having “Met LEP Title III Performance Targets.” Districts which do not have the minimum number of students to be evaluated on any of the three targets are listed as “Not Classified.”

When a district misses at least one target in the year being evaluated, but did not miss any of the targets in the preceding year, the district is listed as in “Watch” status. If a district misses at least one target in the year being evaluated and at least one target in the preceding year, it is listed as “In Need of Improvement.”

If a district has missed a target for three years, it would be in need of improvement for the second year and would be listed as “In Need of Improvement – Second Year.” Districts which reach “In Need of Improvement – Third Year” are placed in a higher level of focus where effective measures of change are expected.

## **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 was more reliably calculated because it was based on the same assessment instrument.

## **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 that are within larger school districts.

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.