

Executive Summary

Alaska Growth Model Proposal



May 1, 2007

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Meeting the Principles

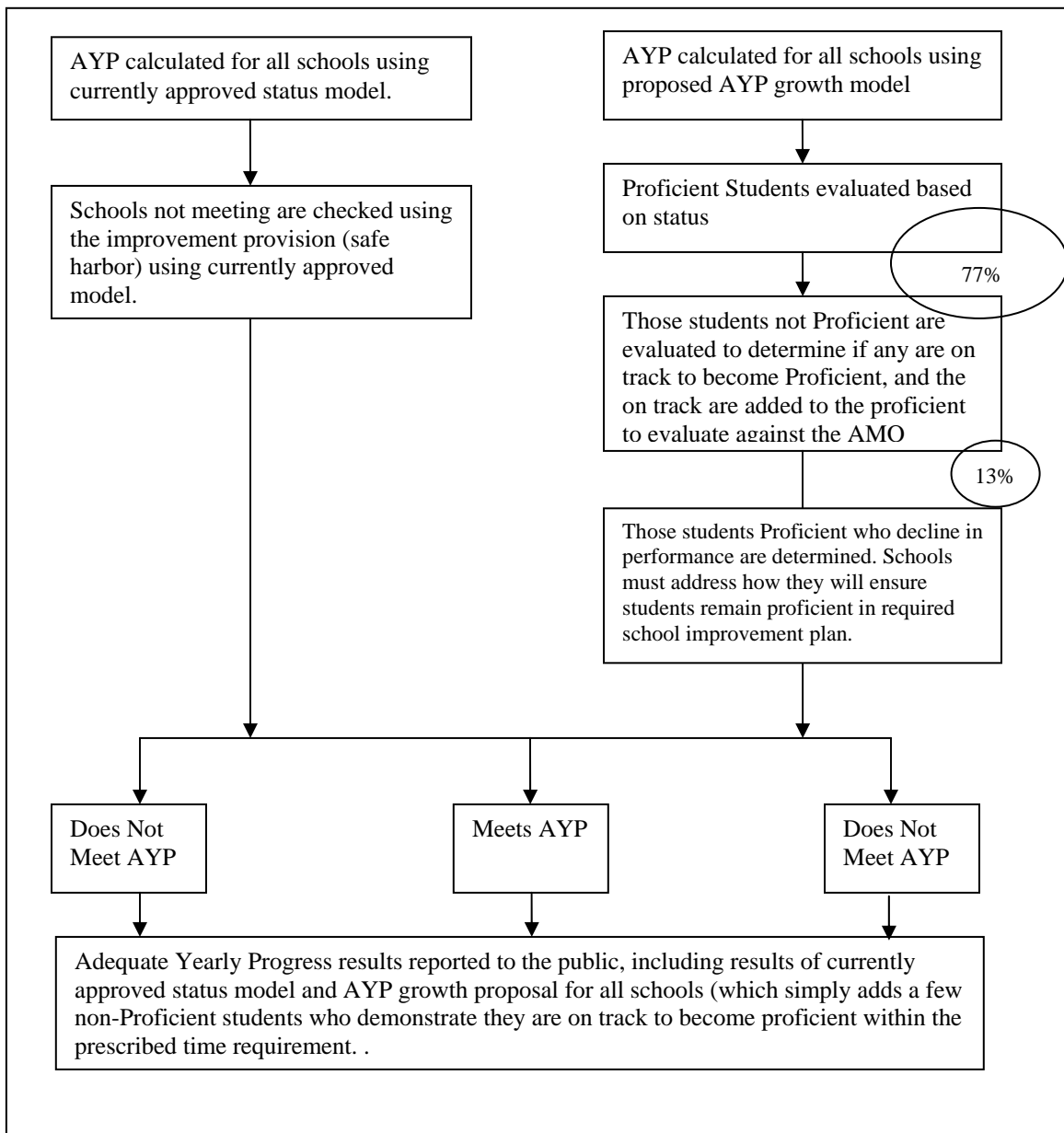
Core Principles	Alaska Response
1. The accountability system must ensure that all students are proficient by 2013-14 and set annual goals to ensure that the achievement gap is closing for all groups.	Alaska’s proposal ensures that all students are proficient or on track to be proficient by 2013-14 and maintains the current targets for closing the achievement gap.
2. The accountability model must establish high expectations for low-achieving students, while not setting expectations for annual achievement based upon demographic or school characteristics.	Alaska’s proposal maintains high expectations for all students and does not differentiate achievement for students based upon demographics or school characteristics.
3. The accountability model must produce separate accountability decisions about student achievement in reading/language arts and in mathematics.	Alaska’s proposal will produce accountability decisions based on reading/writing (language arts) and mathematics separately.
4. The accountability model must ensure that all students in the tested grades are included in the assessment and accountability system. Schools and districts must be held accountable for the performance of student subgroups. The accountability model, applied statewide, must include all schools and districts.	Alaska’s proposal continues to maintain the high student inclusion rate. Alaska tests over 97% of the students in grades 3-10 and meets the 95% participation rate for all subgroups. All schools and districts have been a part of accountability in Alaska since 2002, and that does not change as a result of the Alaska proposal.
5. The State’s NCLB assessment system, the basis for the accountability model, must include annual assessments in each of the grades three through eight and high school in both reading/language arts and mathematics, must have been operational for more than one year, and must receive approval through the NCLB peer review process for the 2005-06 school year. The assessment system must also produce comparable results from grade to grade and year to year.	Alaska’s proposal includes annual assessments of students in grades 3-10 in the content areas of reading/writing (language arts) and mathematics. Alaska has tested all students in grades 3-10 since 2002, using custom designed assessments based on Alaska standards in all those grades starting in 2005 that produced comparable results from grade to grade and were specifically designed to determine measurable growth from grade to grade and from year to year. The Alaska system received full approval on September 13, 2006.
6. The accountability model and related State data system must track student progress.	Alaska’s proposal includes the implementation of a student identification system, started in 2002, that enabled the state to track individual student progress statewide.
7. The accountability model must include student participation rates in the State’s assessment system and student achievement on an additional academic indicator.	Alaska’s proposal continues to incorporate participation rates and an additional academic indicator as outlined in the approved Accountability Workbook.

Organization of Proposal

The Alaska proposal to incorporate growth of individual student learning into NCLB adequate yearly progress includes the letter from Commissioner Sampson, this executive summary, and the NCLB Growth Model Application based on the exact language from the Peer Review Guidance provided by the United States Department of Education on January 25, 2006. This executive summary provides an overview of this proposal and how Alaska meets the seven core principles outlined in Secretary Spellings' November 21, 2005 letter to state chief school officers. The summary continues by outlining the background and purpose of the proposal, history of the development of the Alaska system to support a growth model, how Alaska is addressing school accountability, and how stakeholders have been involved in the design process. The Growth Model Application itself follows the outline of the guidance, and references are made to the evidence documents that are attached to the proposal.

Alaska Growth Model Proposal Synopsis

The Alaska methodology of calculating adequate yearly progress will include two parts. First, AYP will be calculated using the status model that is currently approved by the U. S. Department of Education. Second, Alaska will incorporate a growth calculation of adequate yearly progress. If a school meets the status calculation or meets the growth calculation, then the school will meet AYP.



In Alaska, a student needs to attain a score of 300 to be proficient. This score is the required score for all grades. If a student has a score of 300 or higher, the student is will count as proficient for the school.

If a student has a score less than 300 (i.e., is not proficient), the student may count positively for the school when doing the growth calculation if the student is “on track to becoming proficient.” On track to becoming proficient is defined as closing the gap between the score attained the previous year and 300. The amount of the gap that the student has to close is dependent on the student’s score the previous year, the student’s grade, and the number of years the student has been in the LEA. If the student has been in the LEA continuously since grade 3 (the first year of testing), then the student must have closed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the gap observed at the end of grade 3 by the end of grade 4; $\frac{1}{3}$ of the gap observed at the end of grade 4 by the end of grade 5, and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gap observed at the end of grade 5 by the end of grade 6. By the end of grade 7, the student must be proficient to count positively for his/her school. This example is true for a student in grade 3, 4, 5 or 6, however students in grade 7, 8 and 9 are treated differently as they must be proficient by grade 10 and grade 10 students will only be evaluated based on their status. A student in grade 7 must close $\frac{1}{3}$ of the gap observed at the end of grade 7 by the end of grade 8; $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gap observed at the end of grade 8 by the end of grade 9. By the end of grade 10, the student must be proficient to count positively for his/her school in every situation as that is the last year students are assessed with the Standards Based Assessment.

If the student moves to a new LEA after grade 3, then the timeline for that student would be established from the time the student started attending the new LEA. After one year in the new LEA, the student would need to have closed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the gap from the previous year; after two years, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the gap; and after three years, $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gap. After four years in the LEA, the student must be proficient to count positively for his/her school. This example is true for students in grades 3 through 6, however a student in grades higher than that must close the gap in a way that convinces the state the student will be proficient by grade 10. Once a student is in grade 10 they are evaluated only based on status.

Under this proposal, the proportion of the gap to be closed increases each year, and students in grades 3 through 6 are required to be Proficient by the end of the fourth year of testing, so long as they remain in the LEA for four years. Students in grade 7 and higher must close the gap each year to demonstrate they will be proficient by grade 10. Thus, this new proposal requires all students to be proficient by the end of the fourth year they have been in an LEA, but no later than by 10th grade (the final year of the Standards Based Assessment) to count positively for their school.

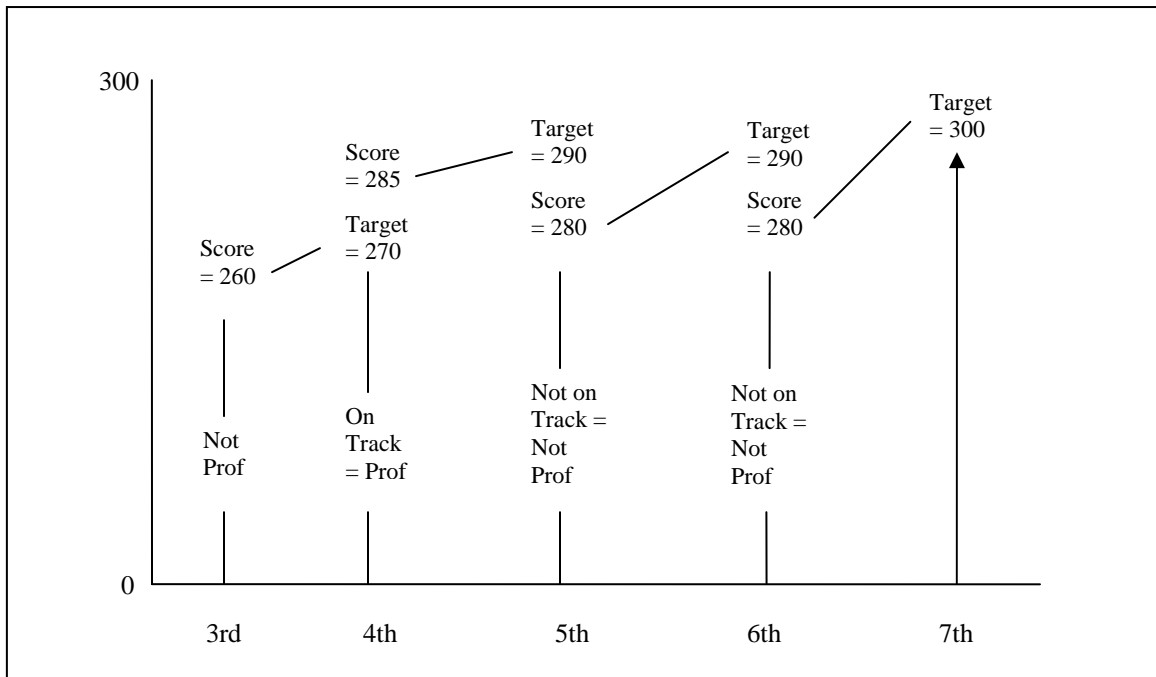
Here is an example of how the computations would work for a hypothetical student when completing the growth calculation. A student scores 260 at the end of grade 3. The student does not count as proficient, nor is the student “on track.” (Since there is no previous test score for students in grade 3 from which to measure growth, all students in grade 3 must have a score of 300 or higher to count as proficient. No students in grade 3 can be “on track.”) This student will need to have a score of at least 270 at the end of grade 4 to count as being “on track.” The required score of 270 is determined by dividing the gap (40 points) by 4 and adding that amount to the attained score of 260.

Suppose that this same student scores 285 at the end of grade 4. This student is not proficient, but is “on track,” since the student attained a score higher than the required score of 270. This student will need to have a score of at least 290 at the end of grade 5 to continue to be counted as being on track. The required score of 290 is determined by dividing the gap (15 points) by 3 and adding that amount to the attained score of 285. Note that the score required at the end of grade 5 is not computed from the student’s score at the end of grade 3, but the score at the end of grade 4.

Suppose further that same student scores 280 at the end of grade 5. This student is not proficient, and although the student has made substantial progress since grade 3, the student is *not* on track, since the student has not attained the required score established in the previous paragraph. To count as being on track at the end of grade 6, the student will need to have a score of 290. The required score is computed by dividing the gap of 20 points by 2 and adding that to the attained score of 280.

Now, suppose at the end of grade 6 the student attains a score of 280 again. The student is not proficient and is not on track. At the end of grade 7 (and for all subsequent grades), the student must score at least 300 to be proficient. There are no further “on track” calculations, since the student has been in the LEA for four years or more.

A student who is retained, does not have a test score from a grade level higher than the previous year, or does not have a score from the previous year will be evaluated based on status alone and not incorporated into the growth calculation for the school. Determining this is already a requirement in state regulation for a state accountability model that awards payment to educators for student performance, therefore consistency in programs will be adhered to.



Proficient Students Declining in Performance

Alaska will determine the collective overall number of proficient students who have a score declined from the previous year. The results of this analysis will be reported to the school and the public. Schools will be required address what measures will take place to ensure these students remain proficient in future years when completing the state required school improvement template.

Alaska Growth Model

The Alaska proposal counts toward the AMO those students who are proficient and those who are on track to be proficient within four years in the first year growth is considered in grades 4-6, three years for grade 7, two years for grade 8, one year for grade 9 and grade 10 students will be evaluated based on status as are grade 3 students. Students would demonstrate they are on track to become proficient within the required number of years when growth is first calculated by demonstrating they have gained one-fourth growth (for grade 4-6) from their current scale score toward 300, the proficient scale score. In the second year they will have to demonstrate a gain of one-third, in the third year one-half, and finally demonstrate proficiency in the fourth year, but no later than by grade 10. Each year the student is considered for growth in the AYP determinations they will have fewer years to reach proficiency. This proposal requires substantial growth in one year and does not compensate for less growth in a subsequent year. The system is transparent and understandable by maintaining some of the simplicity valued by the peers during the previous reviews.

To determine if a student is on track to be proficient, the student's test results for grades 4-9 (grade 3 and 10 are evaluated based on status) will be compared to the results of that same student when he/she was in grades 3-8. Alaska tests students in all grade levels between 3rd and 10th grade, allowing this model to work for all grade level schools that are currently assessed under NCLB for adequate yearly progress. The content area assessments used for this evaluation will be those currently used for adequate yearly progress determinations: mathematics and reading/writing (language arts). Students who are on track to be proficient will be combined with the proficient population for comparison toward meeting the AMO. As a result, all schools will be measured based on 100% meeting the AMO by 2014.

The first year a student is considered for growth the student is on track if (1) he/she is not already proficient, and (2) his/her score in the second year is at least as high as the score the previous year plus one-fourth of the gap (one-third for 10th grade students) between the score the previous year and 300 (proficient). Therefore, the State of Alaska includes students on track to become proficient within four years in grades 4-6, three years in grade 7, two years in grade 8, and one year in grade 9 with those who are proficient to measure against the Annual Measurable Objective target.

A student new to an LEA in grade 3-6 will have four years from entry to reach proficiency, with all students required to be proficient or on track through ninth grade. In

tenth grade a student must demonstrate they are proficient, or they count against the school meeting the AMO target regardless of growth from the previous year.

Alaska uses a 100-600 scale for all content areas and all grade levels, with 300 being proficient in all cases. An example of a student considered to be on track to become proficient follows:

- A student last year in 4th grade had a score of 260.
- $(300-260)/4=10$
- At the end of 5th grade if a student has 270 he is on track to become proficient.

In the second year the example would be:

- A student last year in 5th grade had a score of 270.
- $(300-270)/3=10$
- At the end of 6th grade if a student has 280 he is on track to become proficient.

In the third year the example would be:

- A student last year in 6th grade had a score of 280.
- $(300-280)/2=10$
- At the end of 7th grade if a student has 290 he is on track to become proficient.

In the four year the student will need to be proficient or evaluated based on the status score earned.

Background

Alaska proposes this modification to the existing model because:

- It will result in a better, more valid system providing information that will result in the best interventions and strategies to apply to schools and students.
- It focuses on the individual student's academic achievement and progress from year to year.
- It reflects what Alaska educators, legislators, and policymakers agree on to accurately measure individual student academic achievement.
- It reflects expected and significant student growth from year to year.
- It values proficient students and students making satisfactory progress toward proficiency.
- It's simple: easy for the public, educators, and students to understand.
- It's based on straightforward processes.
- It builds validity by increasing the number of schools making AYP: those with good status scores and progressing growth scores.
- It provides information to schools and the public regarding the number of proficient students who are declining in scale score performance.

School accountability based on status alone does not work in Alaska. Small remote schools are over-identified despite the fact they are making progress with their students

toward meeting proficiency. With the majority of schools serving very small student populations, combining status and individual student growth measures creates a more valid and an inherently fairer system of school accountability within the state. Educators, parents, policymakers, and lawmakers in the state know that a system that measures individual student growth and status is meaningful and provides the opportunity for schools to design better improvement plans. Knowing how a school is really doing involves understanding long-term longitudinal performance of students, including those students who may be on track to become proficient within a reasonable timeframe as well as proficient students who are declining in scale score performance.

Step by Step Example of Model

- Step 1: Calculate the status model as outlined in the currently approved Accountability Workbook, found on the USED web site at: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplans03/index.html>
- Step 2: The determination of participation rate is the same as the determination of participation rate under the existing system of adequate yearly progress.
- Step 3: Students who are full academic year are determined, and then the percentage of students proficient on the assessment are determined.
- Step 4: The proficient student scale score is compared to the scale score the previous year to determine if any proficient students have declined in scale score performance, and if they have this information is reported to the school and public, and addressing measures the school will take to ensure such students remain proficient is required in school improvement plans.
- Step 5: The *not proficient* students' results are analyzed to determine if any of those students in grade four through nine are *on track to be proficient*. The first year a student is considered for growth the student is *on track to be proficient* when their score in the second year is at least as high as the score the previous year; plus one-fourth of the gap (in grades 3-6) between the score the previous year and 300, (the proficient level scale score). The second time a growth calculation is used for a student they must scores has high as the score the previous year plus one-third the gap, and the next year one-half the gap, and in the fourth year the student must be proficient, but no later than by grade 10. An example of a student who started in an LEA as a 3rd grade student follows:
 - Grade 4: scale score in must be at least as high as the score in the 3rd grade year, plus one-fourth of the gap.
 - Grade 5: scale score in must be at least as high as the score in the 4th grade year, plus one-third of the gap.
 - Grade 6: scale score in must be at least as high as the score in the 5th grade year, plus one-half of the gap.
 - Grade 7: the student score will be based on their status score.

If a student moves to a new LEA they have four years from that point to reach proficiency if they are in grade 3-6, three years in grade 7, two years in grade 8, and one year in grade 9. A student in 10th grade must demonstrate they are proficient or to count four the school as they are evaluated on their status scores as are third grade students.

- Step 6: Grade three and grade 10 students, and those in grades 4-9 with no test record from the previous year at a lower grade level than the current year, are included in the analysis and determination based on their status score results.
- Step 7: The *proficient* students and the *on track to be proficient* students are summed and compared to the annual measurable objective (AMO). This step is done for mathematics and for language arts. The language arts scores incorporate the combined scores from the reading and writing assessment. This step is done at the school-as-a-whole level regardless of size and for all subgroups that meet the minimum subgroup size threshold, which is 25 for all subgroups.
- Step 8: The school-as-a-whole other academic indicator is determined to find out if the graduation rate (or attendance rate if the school does not include a 12th grade) meets the threshold requirement.

History

Previous to the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Alaska was designing a state accountability model that incorporated status and growth of individual student achievement. Upon the passage of NCLB, Alaska's first Accountability Workbook included growth as a measure of school accountability. However, those aspects were removed from the workbook, and Alaska submitted a plan that is fully compliant with the NCLB status and safe harbor models. Growth of individual students, however, continues to be an important issue to Alaska lawmakers, policymakers, and stakeholders alike. Under the leadership of the current Alaska Department of Education & Early Development administration, the standards and assessment system was redesigned, incorporating grade level expectations and development of a custom-designed assessment program to accurately measure Alaska standards. Alaska's proposal meets the core principles of a growth model not by coincidence, but by design.

In 2004 Alaska completed the design of grade level expectations, involving outside experts in the review of those expectations. When those standards were reviewed through the NCLB peer-review process, the reviewers noted: "Alaska has done a good job with their content standards. The standards appear rigorous, including DOK analysis." These standards served as the foundation of the assessment system that was designed specifically to determine student achievement against Alaska standards. During the design process Alaska worked with a highly qualified national Technical Advisory Committee, designing an assessment system that would serve as the foundation of school accountability that incorporated individual student growth as a measure of achievement. The new Alaska Standards Based Assessments were given in April 2005 to students in grades 3-9, in April of 2006 to students in grades 3-10, and will continue each April

henceforth. An important point of clarification about the Alaska assessments is that the grade 3-10 Standards Based Assessments are aligned to the grade level content standards for those grades. While Alaska continues to give an essential skills exit exam, referred to as the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination, this is not used in the school, district, and state accountability system.

Measuring growth is widely supported by stakeholders in Alaska, and the state has worked to assure a technically sound system for a growth model. Alaska introduced legislation to the Alaska legislature regarding rewards for staff working in schools where students have demonstrated significant academic growth, which was passed and signed into law during the most recent regular legislative session. While the system used for rewards as outlined in that statute provides incentives for moving all students to higher levels of achievement, the proposal outlined in the NCLB Growth Model Pilot Application will not allow high-performing students to compensate for lack of growth among other students. Overall the concept of measuring student growth is valued in Alaska by all stakeholders.

The performance incentive statute being enacted in Alaska is built upon a system that will provide awards to school staff using a value table that takes into account progress of all students. While the methodology proposed within this application differs from the value table for rewards within the state, it is based on the same foundation of growth toward proficiency and is a valid indicator of school performance and improvement. Alaska has taken the time and utilized resources to create a technically sound system for measuring individual student growth as a measure of school achievement.

Accountability in Alaska

Alaska has made efforts to increase student achievement through strong accountability, inclusion of all students, making information public, and improving teacher quality for many years. The foundation of the school reform efforts leading to increased accountability and improved student achievement began in 1991. In 2002 Alaska began assessing students in grade 3 through 10, and used those assessments for school accountability, including adequate yearly progress designations. This year 38.4% of schools in the state did not meet adequate yearly progress. Alaska has worked hard to make sure school accountability meets the state and federal statutory requirements, thereby supporting NCLB as a system to further enhance student achievement.

Ensuring that students are learning, including state efforts to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap.

Alaska is closing the achievement gap. That conclusion is based on assessment results and analysis of the gap in performance between Caucasian and Alaska Native students. The new assessment system Alaska designed is more appropriate for students in the state. Items that are part of the custom-developed assessment are reviewed by Alaska educators for bias and sensitivity, and therefore the tool to assess students is uniquely designed to

accurately measure Alaska student progress toward meeting the state's rigorous standards. The assessment is designed based on clear and very public targets, which every educator, parent, and policymaker can access. An assessment system that is an accurate measure of student achievement creates a valid system for closing the achievement gap.

Evidence that Alaska is closing the achievement gap can be seen in the statistics regarding school adequate yearly progress designations and two years of results from the Standards Based Assessments. Of the schools that were identified for not meeting adequate yearly progress, 14.7% did not meet AYP partly as a result of the performance of Alaska Native students this year as compared to 17.5% two years ago. Of the same schools, 14.5% did not meet AYP this year partly as the result of the performance of economically disadvantaged students as compared to 19.3% two years ago. The Standards Based Assessment results demonstrate improved performance in 2006 relative to 2005 in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 4-8. Alaska is committed to raising overall achievement and closing the achievement gap.

Alaska is embarking on two projects that will further assist schools in preparing all students to meet the rigorous state content standards. The state has designed model assessment items for each of the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs). These GLE item samplers can be used to assess students, help teachers interpret GLEs as well as understand what a good assessment item looks like. The state is also making available to all districts an on-line formative assessment tool with items that have been reviewed for alignment by the professionals who write the Alaska items for the Standards Based Assessments. These tools will provide excellent resources to understand what good items look like, and provide more frequent feedback to teachers as well as student about achievement.

Ensuring school and district accountability for all students and subgroups, including annual testing in grades 3-8 and high school in reading/language arts and mathematics by the 2005-2006 school year and reporting data on student achievement by subgroup.

Alaska goes beyond the requirements of the law by testing students in ninth grade; therefore, Alaska is able to have an accountability system that incorporates growth for all school configurations. The assessment system used in Alaska is custom designed to assess student achievement of the Alaska standards as articulated in the grade level expectations in reading/writing (language arts) and mathematics. The new custom designed criterion-referenced assessments were first administered in April 2005 in grades 3-9 and in April 2006 included grades 3-10. The results have been disaggregated and reported by major subgroup every year.

This year Alaska is implementing into the accountability system an instructional audit program. The instructional audits, which begin with a desk audit process, involve careful analysis of assessment data, and feedback to the schools. The audit includes, for those districts that need intervention, a visit by a trained audit team. The results of this visit,

and the desk audit, will be used to write the district improvement plans for districts at advanced levels of district improvement.

Ensuring that information is accessible and parents have options, including information on school quality, providing accessible and understandable school and district report cards, identifying schools in need of improvement, and providing quality school choice options and supplemental educational services.

Alaska produces school report cards that are posted on the state website under the Report Card to the Public link and maintains the documentation of adequate yearly progress designations. The website provides a detailed picture of the performance of each school, a list of schools meeting and not meeting adequate yearly progress, as well as a list of schools that qualify for recognition. This information is made public in multiple genres, including a press release each August, information distributed to schools from the department, and in mailings to families from each school and LEA. The information hosted on the state website regarding school performance can be viewed at:

<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/accountability.html>

Once schools are identified, the public needs to be aware of programs that involve school choice and supplemental services. Alaska posts information regarding this on the website and includes sample letters for districts to send to families regarding choice and supplemental services. School districts are monitored, and during that process the state receives assurances that choice, when available, and supplemental services are provided. Alaska has worked to ensure that supplemental services are available, which is no easy task in a state with school sites that are isolated and not connected to a road system. On the front page of the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development website is a link titled No Child Left Behind, which provides details for parents and educators. That site can be viewed at:

<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/nclb/home.html>

Improving teacher quality, including a rigorous system to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified and parents and the public receive information on the quality of their local teaching force.

Alaska is focused on school improvement, and all requirements under NCLB have been incorporated into state regulations. LEAs are required to notify parents of the highly qualified status of their teachers as prescribed in NCLB. These public/parent notification requirements are monitored by the SEA staff to ensure that all districts are in compliance.

The SEA has demonstrated leadership by working with schools to make information about highly qualified status and academic targets public and to support school improvement. The state has worked with each district to assure school improvement planning is done with clear targets focused on analyzing data and changing and improving student instruction in the classroom.

In addition to ensuring that NCLB teacher quality requirements are being implemented, the state is working to assure that students are taught by a highly qualified staff by implementing the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project for teachers and principals. The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development has a formal partnership with the University of Alaska to implement this mentoring project. The 2006-2007 school year is the third full year of implementation. The state has nearly 30 full-time mentors working with nearly 420 new teachers using a model that is a full-time release from their teaching positions program, based on the New Teacher Center's mentoring model that is housed at the University of California Santa Cruz. Forty-four of our 53 school districts are participating in this project in the 2006-2007 school year. Recognizing that instructional leadership is an important factor in school improvement the state is in the second year of a principal mentor program, and starting a superintendent mentor program.

Alaska has completely overhauled its teacher certification program and requirements, including methods to assure that teachers are highly qualified to teach content and deliver the instruction. Beginning in September 2006, teachers in Alaska will be required to demonstrate they know content and they know how to teach through a performance requirement within the teacher certification program. Teachers will be required to successfully complete the performance requirements before they are allowed to move from Tier 1–Initial to Tier II–Professional Certification or into Tier III–Master Certification. The tiered licensure system will guarantee, along with the highly qualified information, that Alaska's teachers are able to prepare students for successful achievement of the Alaska standards.

Additionally, the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development is working with all Alaska universities and colleges that have teacher preparation programs to develop a performance-based accreditation process for those programs.

Alaska understands the importance of reading across all grade levels and content areas, and to demonstrate commitment to good professional development the state developed the Alaska Reading course. This course, which will be delivered for the first time to educators in 2006-2007, was developed based on the findings of the National Reading Panel and designed for K-12 teachers to know more about reading and how to assure that all students are reading at grade level. This type of targeted staff development demonstrates the statewide commitment to local teacher quality in Alaska.

Stakeholder & Technical Advisory Involvement

In the past three years, Alaska adopted grade level expectations that are vertically aligned and assessments that measure similar, yet more sophisticated, content across grade levels. While developing this coherent standards and assessment system, the state has involved stakeholders in committees, which regularly provide feedback. Nearly 10% of Alaska teachers have been involved in committees to establish the standards, review assessments, or have a role in the implementation of the assessment and accountability system within the past two years.

In 1998 the legislature passed, and the governor signed, legislation to put into statute a school accountability requirement and implementation of detailed and informative school report cards. As a result of this law, the state convened the Alaska Designator Committee to design an accountability system. That committee worked diligently to incorporate growth and status into a system to evaluate schools. The work of that committee has served as a foundation for the design of accountability and is at the core of this proposal to incorporate individual student growth into adequate yearly progress.

Alaska has involved the Assessment and Accountability Advisory Committee that represents stakeholders across the state to give early feedback into the concept of a growth model. Alaska has a national Technical Advisory Committee, which includes Ron Hambleton, Joe Ryan Stan Rabinowitz, an LEA representative, a member of the state board, and is supported and facilitated by the Center for Assessment, has examined the growth model and guided the state in designing an assessment system that serves as a foundation for building a growth model, including how to conduct standard setting in an appropriate manner.

Closing

School accountability is important in Alaska. Measures of status and individual student growth are highly valued and viewed as a much more valid system. Twenty three percent of Alaska schools have three or fewer teachers and adding a measure that checks if students not proficient are on track to become proficient will add validity and credibility to the accountability system. Alaska has supported NCLB, particularly the focus that it has provided for improving student achievement.

The state legislature acted by adopting statutory language calling for accountability, and the State Board of Education has adopted language that regulates school accountability to meet both the state statute and NCLB. The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development has worked to create a coherent grade 3-10 assessment system that is vertical in nature for determining growth in achievement and aligned to the state standards. The assessment system serves as the foundation for measuring individual student growth. Alaska has a student identification system that is tested and will support the analysis necessary for success of this growth proposal.

Understanding if students are demonstrating growth and recognizing schools where individual student growth is occurring is a valid method to measure school improvement. It is not an easier method for meeting adequate yearly progress, and in fact may prove to be quite challenging. The proposal for incorporating growth is to provide better information regarding achievement of Alaska students, gain support from stakeholders, and raise the bar of accountability.