
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: MEMBERS, BOARD OF EDUCATION
FROM: ROBERT FRANCIOSI, DEPUTY ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
SUBJECT: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE AZ LEARNS SCHOOL EVALUATION FORMULA
DATE: MARCH 24, 2008

This memo outlines and describes the proposed changes to the AZ LEARNS school evaluation formula. If approved they will take effect with the school evaluations released in the fall of 2008.

- I. Changes to the Growth/Improvement Portion of AZ LEARNS.** The growth/improvement portion of the AZ LEARNS evaluations looks at improvement made by schools in successive cohorts of students; e.g. is the percentage of 3rd graders passing the math test greater than last year?

Currently schools are only credited for growth/improvement in grades 3, 5, 8 and high school because only these grades have been tested for the necessary number of years. Now there are test scores for a sufficient number of years for grades 4, 6, and 7 to analyze improvement in these grades as well.

In addition, we are taking the opportunity to make other changes in the calculation in order to simplify it and to make it more valid.

The proposed changes are:

I.A. The improvement measure used for each subject and grade tested will be the average of the annual changes in [percentage of students passing – percentage of students scoring “falls far below”] from 2005 or when a school opened, whichever is latest. No minimum group size will apply.

Example. The following example shows how the improvement measure would be calculated for a single grade and subject this year. The table shows the percentage of students passing and scoring “falls far below”, and the difference in the two percentages from 2005 to 2008.

Year	Percent Passing	Percent Falls Far Below	Difference
2005	52	18	34
2006	54	17	37
2007	57	15	42
2008	60	10	50

The following table shows the year-to-year changes in the difference.

Year	Year	Year-to-year change
2005 to 2006	37 - 34	3
2006 to 2007	42 - 37	5
2007 to 2008	50 - 42	8

The growth measure is the average $(3 + 5 + 8)/3 = 5.3$.

Under the current method, the growth measure would be (percent passing – percent FFB) in the baseline year subtracted from the average of (percent passing – percent FFB) in the most recent two years. Using the above numbers the measure would be $46 - 37$ or 9.

The advantages to the proposed method over the current method are:

- Allows schools to get credit for growth after two years instead of three.
- Provides a number that is easier to interpret.
- Since it uses more years of data, it provides a more accurate measure.
- Since it uses more years of data, it can be applied to smaller group sizes.
- Provides a more valid growth measure (which can be demonstrated with a mathematical formula.)

I.B. The proposed table used to convert the growth measure for each subject and grade into AZ LEARNS points is the following.

Proposed Improvement Points Table							
Grade	Subject	AZ LEARNS Points 1	AZ LEARNS Points 2	AZ LEARNS Points 3	AZ LEARNS Points 4	AZ LEARNS Points 5	AZ LEARNS Points 6
3-8	Math	<-16	-16 to -9	-8 to 0	1 to 9	10 to 17	>=18
3-8	Read	<-14	-14 to -8	-7 to 0	1 to 7	8 to 14	>=15
3-8	Writ	<-16	-16 to -8	-7 to 0	1 to 11	12 to 20	>=21
HS	Math	<-16	-16 to -7	-6 to 4	5 to 15	16 to 25	>=26
HS	Read	<-12	-12 to -5	-4 to 4	5 to 13	14 to 21	>=22
HS	Writ	<-10	-10 to -2	-1 to 7	8 to 16	17 to 25	>=26

The table is used to convert the growth measure calculated in I.A into AZ LEARNS profile points. A school's AZ LEARNS profile is determined by the number of profile points it earns. So if the subject and grade in the above example were 3rd grade math, then the school would earn 4 points for that grade and subject. The current, approved conversion table is provided below.

Current Improvement Points Table							
Grade	Subject	AZ LEARNS Points 1	AZ LEARNS Points 2	AZ LEARNS Points 3	AZ LEARNS Points 4	AZ LEARNS Points 5	AZ LEARNS Points 6
3	Math	<-15	-15 to -7	-6 to 1	2 to 9	10 to 17	>=18
3	Read	<-20	-20 to -14	-13 to -7	-6 to 0	1 to 8	>=9
3	Writ	<-13	-13 to -5	-4 to 3	4 to 12	13 to 21	>=22
5	Math	<-8	-8 to 0	1 to 8	9 to 17	18 to 25	>=26
5	Read	<-10	-10 to -3	-2 to 5	6 to 13	14 to 22	>=23
5	Writ	<0	0 to 9	10 to 20	21 to 31	32 to 41	>=42
8	Math	<18	18 to 26	27 to 35	36 to 44	45 to 53	>=54
8	Read	<-11	-11 to -3	-2 to 7	8 to 16	17 to 25	>=26
8	Writ	<17	17 to 27	28 to 38	39 to 49	50 to 60	>=61
HS	Math	<6	6 to 13	14 to 21	22 to 29	30 to 37	>=38
HS	Read	<-16	-16 to -7	-6 to 3	4 to 12	13 to 22	>=23
HS	Writ	<-24	-24 to -14	-13 to -4	-3 to 7	8 to 18	>=19

II. Unified Achievement Profile for Schools Serving Elementary/Middle and High School Grades.

Up until now, schools serving both the elementary/middle and high school grade spans have received two separate AZ LEARNS achievement profiles: one for the elementary/middle grades, and one for the high school grades. This created some confusion and difficulty, especially if a school received an underperforming profile at one level and a performing or higher profile at another.

Last year, state law was amended to allow the calculation of a unified profile for combined middle/high schools. The combined profile will comprise all the components of the AZ LEARNS evaluation at both levels:

- AIMS results
- Measure of Academic Progress
- Graduation and dropout rates
- AYP evaluation
- AZELLA Scores

The Board has approved the following:

II.A. The AZ LEARNS profile for K-12 schools are proposed to be assigned based on the following table.

AZ LEARNS profile	AZ LEARNS Points Earned		
	Current AZ LEARNS scale	Percent of total points	Proposed scale for K-12 schools
Underperforming	<13	<48%	<14
Performing	13	48	14
Highly Performing	16	59	17
Excelling	19	70	20

The table was developed so that the percentage of points needed to earn a specific AZ LEARNS profile remained constant. For example, the current scale requires that a school earn 13 out of 27 total possible points or 48 percent to be Performing. K-12 schools may earn up to 29 points. 48 percent of 29 is 13.9 or 14.