



Reaching New Vistas of Achievement and Opportunity

SCHOOL LEADERS' GUIDE TO THE 2003 MID-CYCLE AYP REPORTS

This brief guide explains the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determination process that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has put in place to monitor the progress of our public schools towards meeting the goal of high achievement for all students. The information gleaned from this monitoring process is designed to help local and state education leaders determine what improvement strategies are succeeding—and when help is needed to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their potential.

The AYP determination process described in this document is part of the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System (MSDAS). The system has been modified in 2003 to conform with the accountability requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). For individual school and district AYP reports and for information on other components of the MSDAS, visit the Massachusetts Department of Education website, www.doe.mass.edu/ATA.

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Measuring Progress Toward Proficiency: Understanding AYP's Role

This year marks the mid-way point in an ambitious, two-decade effort to bring all public school students in Massachusetts to high levels of achievement and opportunity. Massachusetts is a national leader in this historic, expeditionary effort. With passage in 2000 of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, this climb toward higher standards for student achievement has become an expedition in which we are joined by students, teachers, and education leaders nationwide.

The significant gains in student performance that have been achieved by Massachusetts schools since we began our education reform journey in 1993 are a tribute to the vision, ingenuity and hard work of teachers and school leaders throughout the Commonwealth. We aspire to reach new heights of student achievement over the next ten years. To do so, we must work together to help each other overcome daunting obstacles. Most of all, we need to hold fast to our dream and not give up on any of our students, no matter how arduous the climb.

In many communities, most students are well on their way to levels of academic proficiency that at the end of high school will afford them meaningful choices for higher education and employment. Elements of Massachusetts' school performance review system are designed to help those districts bring their students to even higher levels of achievement. But even in communities where most students are attaining English language arts (ELA) and mathematics proficiency, there are students who are not achieving this essential standard. It is those students not yet on a path to high levels of attainment that are the focus of our current school improvement efforts. And in some Massachusetts communities, many students are in need of concerted help to find and stay on that path.

To proficiency (and beyond) by 2014: No Child Left Behind has made it the law of the land that we will commit ourselves to the goal of helping every child achieve proficiency in English language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics by 2014. Each state is permitted to define what is meant by "proficiency." In Massachusetts, we have set a standard for proficiency that is intended to ready our students for success not only in U.S. colleges and universities, but in the 21st-century high-tech global economy, as well.

Massachusetts, along with perhaps a half-dozen other states, has had a significant head start in meeting NCLB's ambitious goals because of our State's solid investments in higher-standards reform since 1993. To meet NCLB's requirements, we have adjusted our assessment and accountability policies and procedures in some areas. In recognition of our achievements over the past decade, the federal government has been flexible in working with us to meld NCLB requirements with essential components of the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System established in 1999.

Understanding a complex system: The resulting system of school and district assessment and accountability processes and terms — MCAS, AYP, CPI, review cycles, performance ratings, Improvement Targets — is complex. This brief guide is intended to help you understand the Fall 2003 Mid-cycle Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Reports for your district and its schools and answer most stakeholder questions about AYP in the short term. More materials summarizing the entire school/district accountability system will be posted to the www.doe.mass.edu/ATA website in coming weeks. We encourage you to use them. Districts and schools that enable their communities to view AYP and other performance indicators as useful tools for the journey, not as extra burdens, will help their students climb the ELA and math "mountains" with a lighter step and a better sense of the path to the top.

2003 Mid-Cycle Adequate Yearly Progress (“AYP”) Determinations

As required by NCLB, this year we are issuing mid-cycle AYP determinations for each school and district. These determinations are based on participation and performance data from the 2002-2003 school year. Improvement findings are based on a comparison of spring 2003 MCAS test results to results from MCAS tests administered in 2001 and 2002. Cycle III biannual school performance and improvement ratings, together with end-of-cycle AYP determinations, will be issued in fall 2004.

AYP determinations are made separately for English language arts (ELA) and for mathematics. For each subject there are multiple AYP determinations — for **students in the aggregate**, and for **student subgroups** of 20 or more students. Student groups for whom AYP determinations will be made include students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, economically disadvantaged students (eligible for free/reduced school lunch), and African American, Hispanic, Asian, White, and Native American students. Students will be counted in *each* student group to which they belong.

To receive an affirmative 2003 mid-cycle AYP determination, schools and districts must meet a student participation requirement (see Table 1) *and* either the state’s Cycle III performance target for that subject, *or* the school or district’s own Cycle III improvement target and the additional attendance or graduation indicator described in boxes C and D below.

How Are AYP Determinations Calculated?

Table 1.

AYP =	AYP Determination Factors	Cycle III Targets (2-year period ending in 2004)
A + B	A. Participation Rate: <i>Are almost all of our students taking part?</i>	95% or greater participation in state assessments (combined standard MCAS tests and MCAS-Alt)
	B. Performance: <i>Have we met the state’s performance target for the current review period?</i>	State Cycle III performance targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composite Performance Index (CPI) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75.6 — English Language Arts 60.8 — Mathematics
OR		
A + C + D	A. Participation Rate: <i>Are almost all of our students taking part?</i>	95% or greater participation in State assessments (combined standard MCAS tests and MCAS-Alt)
	C. Improvement: <i>Is our rate of improvement such that all students will reach proficiency by 2014?</i>	A district, school or subgroup’s Cycle III improvement target is 100 minus its baseline CPI, divided by 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2003 mid-cycle AYP target = 2/3 of Cycle III target
	D. Performance or Improvement on Additional Indicator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-8: <i>Does our attendance meet the state target or represent a 1% improvement over 2002?</i> • High School: <i>Did our Class of 2003 meet the state graduation rate target?</i> 	Attendance criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of 92% or above or • At least 1 percentage point improvement over prior year Grade 12 Competency Determination (CD) criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class of 2003 CD attainment rate, as of September 1, 2003, of 70% or higher

Understanding Your Cycle III Baseline Information

Performance "baselines" used to calculate ratings and AYP determinations for Cycle III are derived from student performance and participation data for the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years. A school's or district's Cycle III baseline Composite Performance Index (CPI) for ELA or mathematics will be different from its Cycle II proficiency index because the rules governing the use of data for Cycle III have changed. Specifically, in Cycle III:

- **MCAS test results for grade 3 reading and grade 6 mathematics** will be incorporated into composite performance calculations. These results were not included in the calculation of Cycle II ratings and AYP determinations.
- **Baseline performance** will be calculated by combining results from all tested grades in a school in each content area. Schools that in Cycle II got two reports, one based on grade 4 and one on grade 8, in Cycle III will receive one AYP determination report.
- **MCAS test results for students who enrolled in a school after October 1st** of the school year, which were used to calculate Cycle II ratings, are not included in calculating a school's Cycle III baselines and AYP determinations. The results for *all* enrolled students are used in calculating district AYP determinations.
- **Effective in 2003, all LEP students were required to participate in MCAS tests.** School and district baselines for Cycle III have been adjusted to account for this change in policy.
- **Baseline performance has been calculated for student subgroups** as well as for students in the aggregate.

Understanding the Composite Performance Index

During Cycle II we introduced the "Proficiency Index" —a measure of the distribution of student performance in a school relative to attaining grade-level proficiency. A school's proficiency index reflects student performance only on standard MCAS tests scored with reference to grade-level student learning standards. Beginning in 2003, we are required to expand the measures used to assess school and district performance and improvement to include data from the MCAS-Alt assessment program.

In rendering the annual "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) determinations required under the No Child Left Behind Act, states are permitted to apply alternate performance standards to assess the learning of students with significant cognitive/intellectual impairments. Alternate learning standards may only be used to assess the progress of students who are unable to perform grade-level work in core academic subjects as a result of significant cognitive/intellectual impairment. Statewide and in each school district, alternate standards may be applied to account for the performance/progress of no more than 1% of the total student population.

In Massachusetts, the MCAS-Alt assessment, a portfolio review process, is used to assess the attainment of students who, by reason of severe and complex disabilities, are not able to participate in the standard MCAS testing program. About 1% of students in our public schools participate in the MCAS-Alt assessment program. Most MCAS-Alt assessed students have significant cognitive impairments.

Beginning with the 2003 AYP determinations, the assessment results of students participating in MCAS-Alt assessments, together with those derived from standard MCAS tests, will be used to generate a "Composite Performance Index" on which AYP determinations will be based, as shown in the tables on the following page.

How is the Composite Performance Index Calculated?

A school or district's Composite Performance Index (CPI) is calculated by combining points generated by students who take the standard MCAS tests with points generated by students who take the MCAS-Alt. Points are calculated by determining, in each subject for each student group, the following:

1. (**Table 2a**) the number of students who took **standard MCAS tests** who performed at each of the five proficiency levels set out in Table 2a and multiplying the number at each level times the proficiency index points associated with that level;
2. (**Table 2a**) the number of students who participated in the **MCAS-Alt for reasons other than significant cognitive impairments** who demonstrated performance equivalent to each of the five proficiency levels set out in Table 2a and multiplying the number at each level times the proficiency index points assigned to that level; and
3. (**Table 2b**) the number of students with significant cognitive impairments who demonstrated performance at each of the five MCAS-Alt levels shown in Table 2b and multiplying the number at each level times the MCAS-Alt index points associated with that level.
- 4) The point totals from steps one, two and three above are added together and the sum is divided by the total number of students assessed (standard MCAS tests and the MCAS-Alt.)

The result is a number between 0 and 100, which constitutes the school's or district's Composite Performance Index ("CPI") for that subject and student group.

Table 2a. **Proficiency Index Points**

For students taking standard MCAS tests and for MCAS-Alt participants who do not have significant cognitive impairments		
MCAS SCALED SCORE or MCAS-Alt Equivalent		POINTS AWARDED
240 – 280	Proficient/Advanced	100
230 – 238	Needs Improvement - High	75
220 – 228	Needs Improvement - Low	50
210 – 218	Warning/Failing - High	25
200 – 208	Warning/Failing - Low	0

Table 2b. **MCAS-Alt Index Points**

For students with significant cognitive impairments taking MCAS-Alt (up to 1% of all assessed students)	
MCAS-Alt SCORE	POINTS AWARDED
Progressing	100
Emerging	75
Awareness	50
Portfolio Incomplete	25
Portfolio not submitted	0