



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234
Office for Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education
Office of School Improvement and Community Services (NYC)

Office of the Associate Commissioner
55 Hanson Place, Brooklyn New York 11217
Telephone: (718) 722-2796
Fax: (718) 722-4559

January 2006

To: District Superintendents of Schools
Superintendents of Public Schools
Presidents of Boards of Education

From: Shelia Evans-Tranumn *Shelia Evans-Tranumn*

Subject: **Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations**

Section 100.2(p) of Commissioner's Regulations requires that the State Education Department consider for identification for registration review any high school or school serving special populations that is among those farthest from State standards. These standards are designed primarily to measure the performance of schools in which the student population is heterogeneous and in which most students articulate directly from middle school to high school. SED offers an alternative accountability system for schools in which 50 percent or more are students that transfer from other high schools or in which 50 percent or more are students with disabilities. This Alternative Accountability System allows any school that meets one or more of these criteria to use supplementary performance indicators to best ascertain how successful the school is in educating its students.

The Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations is a means by which a local school district and the State Education Department agree in advance upon a set of supplementary indicators that will be used to determine whether a school will be considered farthest from State standards and, therefore, subject to potential identification as a School Under Registration Review. A school that chooses to use the supplementary performance indicators must calculate them according to SED specifications. SED also requires that the selected supplementary indicators be included in the school's report card. Schools that participate in the Alternative Accountability System and meet the criteria mentioned above (50 percent or more students are transfers from other high schools, or 50 percent or more are students with disabilities), may also use the Alternative High School Cohort (See Eligibility Form E). **Participation in the Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations is used only to determine the registration review status of schools and does not effect determinations regarding whether a school has made Adequate Yearly Progress pursuant to New York State's approved plan for No Child Left Behind accountability.**

Districts with schools that meet the criteria mentioned above may voluntarily participate in the Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations.

Attached for your information are:

- Alternative Accountability System for High Schools Petition Form (Form A)
- Calculation and Submission of the Alternative Accountability System Eligibility Form (Form B)
- Supplementary Indicators (Form C)
- Replacement of Supplementary Indicator (Form D)
- 2001 Alternative Accountability System Cohort Report (Form E)
- 2001 Alternative Accountability System Cohort Performance (Form F)
- Alternative Accountability: Questions and Answers

Petitions to participate in the program during the 2005-2006 school year must be post-marked **no later than March 14, 2006 for schools that meet the transfer rate criteria and April 28, 2006 for schools that meet the percentage of students with disabilities criteria** and sent to:

Ira Schwartz Coordinator
New York State Education Department
Office of School Improvement and Community Services (NYC)
55 Hanson Place
Brooklyn, New York 11217
Attention: Alternative Accountability System for High Schools

School districts should review the attached materials carefully to determine whether any school in their districts would benefit from participation in the Alternative Accountability System for High Schools.

For further information about this program, interested parties should contact Ira Schwartz at (718) 722-2796 or ischwart@mail.nysed.gov.

Attachments

**Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations
Procedures for Submission of Supplementary Indicators**

STEP 1: SED has established the following set of supplementary school indicators:

- AYP targets for students on ELA and/or math or approved alternatives;
- Performance of students on other Regents examinations;
- Performance of students on commercially available norm-referenced tests
- Credit accumulation;
- Attendance rates;
- Dropout **or** graduation rates;
- Suspension rates (Provided that the school has not been identified as a Persistently Dangerous School or been identified by the district for intervention because of school safety issues); and
- Movement to a less restrictive environment and/or declassification rates.
- Successful articulation to a regular/traditional school.
- Longitudinal gains of students on the Grade 3-8 NYS assessments in ELA and math (for schools serving special populations).

STEP 2: A district may petition for any school, as identified by a unique BEDS code, in which 50 percent or more of students are transfers from other high schools, or in which 50 percent or more are students with disabilities.

STEP 3: The objective for each indicator shall be to ensure either that students achieve the State standards or that the school's performance is above the Statewide average on the indicator. If a commercially available norm-referenced test is used, the goal is for 50 percent of students to achieve at or above the 50th percentile, unless permission is received to use an alternative goal. If an indicator is approved for which there is no Statewide average, the district average or the Statewide similar schools average may be used as the goal. Data for the indicator must be submitted to SED by November 1. The district, as part of its application, must submit a plan for how the performance benchmark will be calculated and the appropriate data collected and verified. For New York City, the petition is to be submitted by the Chancellor. All schools in a district participating in the program are encouraged to use the same methodology for calculation of a supplementary indicator. However, the Department is prepared to accommodate multiple measures so long as they are centrally collected, publicly reported, and applied to more than one school within the district.

A school's supplementary indicators must address each criterion on which the schools' student performance was farthest from State standards during the 2004-05 school year, except that a supplementary indicator is not necessary on a criterion for which the school made AYP through the use of the Safe Harbor provision. The cutoffs for farthest from State standards for 2004-05 are as follows:

Grade 4 English Language Arts: Performance Index of 98

Grade 4 Math: Performance Index of 100

Grade 8 ELA: Performance Index of 95

Grade 8 Math: Performance Index of 70

High School English Language Arts: Performance Index of 98

High School Mathematics: Performance Index of 98

STEP 4: (a) *Gap Reduction Method for use with supplementary indicators*

Each school shall establish a benchmark based on its current performance in terms of the supplementary indicators. The goal shall be to close the gap between the desired performance and the current performance by 20 percent.

The supplementary indicators must be explicitly linked to the school's mission. The gap reduction benchmark must be statistically valid and show positive movement of students on the supplementary indicator. The indicator must be based upon a minimum of 30 students or on the entire enrollment of the school.

(b) *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Method for use with core State standards*

For indicators that are based upon State assessments in English language arts or mathematics, the goal shall be to make Adequate Yearly Progress with the "all student" group. For indicators that are based upon the performance of the annual high school cohort in social studies or science, the goal shall be to reduce by 10% the gap between the school's baseline performance for the "all student" group and the goal of a performance index of 200.

STEP 5: SED will review and approve the school's supplementary indicators and proposed performance benchmarks. If approved, the supplementary indicators would remain in effect for two years.

STEP 6: SED will annually assess the performance of schools participating in the Alternative Accountability System against the State standard established in Part 100.2(p) of Commissioner's Regulations and the school's supplementary indicators.

STEP 7: A school participating in the Alternative Accountability System will not be considered a school farthest from State standards if it either meets all Part 100.2(p) criteria or meets or exceeds the gap reduction targets established for a majority of its supplementary indicators. Schools in which fewer than 30 students are subject to the indicators or in which the total enrollment of the school is less than 30 students will have data from prior year(s) reviewed in order to determine whether the school is farthest from State standard. Schools in which no students participate in the State testing program will be subject to the registration review process outlined in Part 100.2(p)(9)(iii) of Commissioner's Regulations.

STEP 8: If a school participating in the Alternative Accountability System is identified as farthest from meeting the State standards and is failing to meet its gap reduction targets for a majority of its supplementary indicators, the school district shall be given the opportunity to submit additional assessment data or provide data on extraordinary, temporary circumstances that affected student performance at the school.

STEP 9: If, after review of the material submitted (see Step 8), the Commissioner determines that the school is farthest from meeting State standards, failed to meet its gap reduction targets and is determined to be most in need of improvement, then the school shall be placed under registration review by the Commissioner of Education.

STEP 10: Once placed under registration review, a school participating in the Alternative Accountability System, must either meet the same minimum performance standards as all other Schools Under Registration Review or such alternative standards as the Commissioner may establish. However, for alternative high schools and schools serving special populations the minimum performance standards and performance benchmarks will be the same, except that the performance target must always be at least as high as the cutpoint for farthest from State standards for that year. In addition, the Commissioner may give consideration to the school's performance on its approved supplementary indicators in determining the registration review status of the school.

Examples of Supplementary Indicators for the Alternative Accountability System

English Language Arts Performance:

AYP targets for ELA performance

Performance on indicator in 2004-2005: An “all student” performance index for the 2001 high school cohort of 110.

For 2005-2006, A “total school” performance index for the 2002 high school cohort of 119. (200-110 X .1=119, the Safe Harbor target for this group.)

For 2006-2007, A “total school” performance index for the 2003 high school cohort as necessary to make AYP for the “all student” group.

Mathematics Performance:

AYP targets for Math performance

(Using Norm-Referenced Test)

Performance on indicator in 2005-2006: Using the *Wide-Range-Achievement-Test* (for example) 20% of students achieved at or above the 50th percentile.

AYP for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 will be 26% of students achieved at or above the 50th percentile.

Attendance:

90 percent of students who were enrolled on BEDS day will be absent no more than 10 school days per year.

Performance on indicator in 2004-05: 50 percent.

Supplementary Alternative Indicator Benchmark for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007: 58 percent.

Average daily attendance of students shall meet or exceed 90.0 percent.

Performance on indicator in 2004-05: 93 percent.

Supplementary Alternative Indicator Benchmark for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007: 90 percent.

(Since school's performance exceeds 90%, the benchmark is to continue to perform at this level.)

Completion:

A number equal to 20% of the school's register on BEDS day shall graduate from the school during the year.

Performance on indicator in 2005-2006: 10 percent.

Supplementary Alternative Indicator Benchmark for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007: 20 percent.

Note: This indicator is absolute. No growth target is permitted if a school's based performance is below the target.

Dropout Rate:

The annual dropout rate shall be less than 5.7 percent.

Performance on indicator in 2002-2003: 4.0 percent.

Supplementary Alternative Indicator Benchmark for 2003-2004 and 2004-2005: 4.0 percent.

(Since school's performance exceeds Statewide average, the benchmark is to continue to perform at this level.)

Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations

Questions and Answers

Q. 1: What is the Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations?

A. 1: The Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations is a voluntary process by which a local school district and the State Education Department agree in advance upon a set of supplementary indicators that will be used to determine whether schools that meet eligibility criteria will be considered farthest from State standards and therefore subject to potential identification as schools under registration review. Districts may submit a petition on behalf of certain schools to use supplementary indicators from a pre-approved list by SED. If a school achieves satisfactory gap reduction on a majority of its supplementary indicators, the school will not be considered for registration review even if student performance in ELA or mathematics is very low thereby placing the school among those farthest from State standards.

Q. 2: Which schools may participate in the program?

A. 2: School participation in the Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and Schools Serving Special Populations is voluntary. The system is intended for schools eligible to use the alternative cohort, including schools serving primarily special education students.

The option is available to any school which:

- Has been assigned a unique BEDS code by SED; **and**
- Has more than 50 percent of enrollment in grades 9-12 that are students who transferred from other high schools; or
- Has more than 50 percent of enrollment that are students with disabilities.

Programs operated by BOCES and public charter schools are not subject to registration review and need not participate in this system.

Q. 3: How does the system work?

A. 3: By March 14, 2006 for transfer schools and by April 30, 2006 for schools serving special populations, a district may petition on behalf of schools that wish to participate in the Alternative Accountability System for High Schools. For each school, the district will select three supplementary indicators from a list pre-approved by the State Education Department. At least one supplementary indicator must be based upon State assessments in ELA and/or math that is available from the Department's database. Data for the indicator must be submitted by October 1. The district must submit a plan for how the performance benchmark will be calculated and the data collected and verified.

Each school shall establish a benchmark based on its current performance in terms of the supplementary indicator. The goal shall be to close the gap between the desired performance and the current performance by 20 percent, or to exceed the Statewide average, or to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress on a State assessment for the “whole school” group. Transfer schools may also use an indicator having at least 20% of their BEDS day enrollment graduate each year.

SED will review and approve the school's supplementary indicators and proposed performance benchmarks. Once approved, the supplementary indicators would remain in effect for two years. SED will annually assess the performance of schools participating in the Alternative Accountability System. A school will not be considered a school farthest from State standards if it either meets all Part 100.2(p) criteria, or meets or exceeds the gap reduction targets established for a majority of its supplementary indicators. If a participating school is identified as farthest from State standards, SED would then follow the process by which it determines whether a school is most in need of improvement and should be placed under registration review.

Q. 4: What is the advantage of a school participating in the system?

A. 4: It allows participating schools to develop supplementary indicators that most appropriately measure how well the school is performing in relation to its stated mission.

Q. 5: If a school participating in the Alternative Accountability System is determined to be farthest from State standards, can a district still submit additional local assessment data?

A. 5: Yes, the school may provide additional data to demonstrate that the school is not most in need of improvement.

Q. 6: What are examples of supplementary indicators?

A. 6: The current SED list of approved supplementary indicators are:

- AYP targets for students on ELA and/or math or approved alternatives,
- Performance of students on other Regents examinations;-
- Performance of students on commercially available norm-referenced tests,
- Credit accumulation,
- Attendance rates,
- Dropout **or** graduation rate,
- Suspension Rate (Provided that the school has not been identified as a Persistently Dangerous School or been identified by the district for intervention because of school safety issues),
- Movement to a less restrictive environment and/or declassification rates.
- Successful articulation to a regular/traditional high school.
- Individual student gains on the grade 3-8 State assessments in ELA and math (for schools serving special populations.)

Q. 7: What might be a performance benchmark based upon these supplementary indicators?

A. 7: Some examples of a performance benchmark might be:

Students on register will demonstrate an attendance rate of 85%.

90 percent of students will attend school without being suspended.

90 percent of the students will graduate in four years.

90 percent of the students will earn 8 credits or more a year.

Q. 8: Can school districts submit a petition for supplementary indicators that are not currently approved by SED?

A. 8: Yes, if a school district wishes to use supplementary indicators not currently approved by SED, it can submit a petition containing three indicators from the pre-approved list of SED along with a proposed replacement indicator not currently approved and a recommendation as to which indicators should be replaced once the proposed supplementary indicator is accepted by SED. If accepted, the new indicator will be added to the list of approved SED supplementary indicators and will be available for use by schools statewide. Form D should be used to submit supplementary indicators. The form should clearly show which indicator the new indicator is intended to replace.

Q. 9: What if a school is performing at a high level on a particular indicator? How can this be factored into the alternative accountability system?

A. 9: If a school chooses an indicator that appears on the State report card then the school may set as its benchmark to exceed the average statewide performance for all public schools. For example, assume the average annual dropout rate for all schools in the State is 4.6 percent. A school may set as its benchmark to have a dropout rate lower than 4.6 percent, even if the school has already met this target in the current school year.

Q. 10: What happens if a school is not farthest from State standards?

A. 10: A school that is not farthest from State standards will not be considered for registration review. If a school submits data that indicates that it is not farthest from State standards as measured by the alternative high school cohort, then the school will not be considered for registration review. It is the responsibility of the school district to calculate the alternative high school cohort and submit documentation regarding the calculation of the alternative high school cohort. See forms E and F for how to calculate the alternative high school cohort.

Q. 11: Can a school participate in the Alternative Accountability System if the district does not wish to include the results on the supplementary performance indicators on its high school report card?

A. 11: No. Public disclosure of the supplementary performance indicators and performance in relation to these indicators is a requirement for participation in the system.

Q. 12: If two schools in the district are participating in the Alternative Accountability System for High Schools and both wish to use attendance as a supplementary indicator, can they use different ways to measure improvement in attendance?

A. 12: No. A district must measure and report each supplementary indicator uniformly for all participating schools in the district.

For example, attendance indicators might be stated as:

- the average daily attendance will exceed 90 percent, or
- 90 percent of students will be absent 10 days or less.

One school cannot choose the first indicator while another school within the district chooses the latter; all schools within a district must agree upon a consistent measurement of the supplementary indicators. However, if a district had four or more schools participating in the Alternative Accountability System, the Department is prepared to accommodate multiple measures so long as they are centrally collected and publicly reported and applied to two or more schools.

Q. 13: Does participation in the Alternative Accountability System have any effect upon the establishment of AYP targets?

A. 13: No. Schools must meet the same AYP targets regardless of whether they participate in the system or not. However, participation in the program may help a school avoid SURR designation.

Q. 14: What information will be reported in the school report card for schools participating in the Alternative Accountability System?

A. 14: In addition to the school's student performance on ELA and math graduation assessments and four-year graduation rate, the school district is required to report the performance on supplementary indicators as a supplement to the school report card.

Q.15: How can appropriate supplementary indicators be established if there is high variability in the academic performance level of the students who are admitted to the school each year?

A.15: Schools in those circumstances should explore establishing growth targets for their students using standardized assessments.