Minnesota's New Accountability System

Minnesota applied for and received a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to *No Child Left Behind.* In order for the waiver to be approved Minnesota was required to develop a new school accountability system to replace Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). It was Minnesota's goal to develop a better tool – one less punitive and more positive. The Minnesota Department of Education believes that this new system will serve students much better than what we've had in the past.

Last year, nearly half of all Minnesota schools were considered failing under the federal law for not making AYP. Most experts consider that misleading since most measures show MN schools are doing a good job. Schools that repeatedly missed the mark were required to move funds originally dedicated to instruction of the district's Title I students to free after-school tutoring or busing to better schools, and eventually had to replace principals and teachers.

This new accountability system frees the state from some of the tougher requirements of the federal *No Child Left Behind Law*, such as the mandate that all students be proficient in reading and math by 2014, and removes the biggest penalties for schools at the bottom. Part of Minnesota's plan is to identify Minnesota's highest performing schools, as well as those who would most benefit from additional assistance. Continuing to identify and label schools was a requirement for any waiver to be approved.

The first results, based on test data from 2010 and 2011 were released on May 22, 2012. This data will be known as the "initial designation" but revised ratings will be released in August when test data from 2012 will be included.

Under the new plan, schools will still be judged on their students' scores in math and reading, but they will also have to show academic growth in individual students, a strong high school graduation rate, and a shrinking achievement gap between middle-class white students and their classmates.

The new system is known as the Multiple Measurement Ratings (or MMR). All schools will receive an annual MMR based on a scale from 1-100. The MMR consists of four measurements:

- **Proficiency** (the AYP index model is used with schools earning points based on a weighted percentage of subgroups making AYP)
- **Student Growth** (measures the ability of schools to get students to exceed predicted growth)
- **Achievement Gap Closure** (measures the ability of schools to get higher levels of growth from lower-performing subgroups than statewide average growth for higher-performing subgroups)
- **Graduation Rate** (looks at the percentage of subgroups that made AYP in graduation rate)

Each of the four domains above is worth 25 points and an MMR is generated by dividing the total points in each domain by the total possible. Since graduation rates are not a factor at elementary or middle school, the maximum number of points earned for these schools is 75. High schools are 100 points.

Under the new system, the top-performing 15 percent of schools receiving Title I funds (about 125 schools) will be called "Reward" schools. The lowest-performing 5 percent of poverty schools will now be called "Priority" schools. Priority Schools must submit plans to show improvement, but they'll have more freedom on how to do it.

A third new label -- "Focus" schools -- will go to the 10 percent of poverty schools performing the worst when it comes to closing the achievement gap. MDE will work with these schools to reduce their achievement gap. Schools will also receive a Focus Rating (FR) which is a secondary indicator that only kicks in if your school is in the bottom 10%. The FR is designed to further examine the achievement gap within the school.

All BHM Schools scored in the upper half of Minnesota schools. For more information on a particular school, parents can go to the MDE website at http://education.state.mn.us. District staff will be examining MMR data in depth this summer after the 2012 data is released.

Determining Multiple Measurement Ratings

Each of the following four domains is worth 25 points in determining a school's Multiple Measurement Rate (MMR). The graduation domain is applicable for only high schools.

Proficiency (25 points):

The AYP index model is used and the percentage of subgroups meeting their targets is calculated. The same AYP symbols are used to indicate subgroup proficiency:

A = subgroup hit AYP target
B = subgroup missed AYP target
Z = cell size too small and is not included in AYP calculations

Schools earn points based on a weighted percentage of subgroups making AYP. Weighting is based on the size of subgroups. Since most subgroups make their targets at the elementary level, if an elementary school has any subgroups not making AYP the school will earn few proficiency points. Proficiency rates appear higher in 2011 than 2010 because MDE recalibrated AYP targets to 2020 (not 2014). Old AYP targets were used in 2010, but were revised for 2011. Unlike in AYP calculation, with MMR groups can't make AYP through safe harbor.

Growth (25 points):

All students are expected to achieve growth, no matter their starting point. Growth is determined by whether a student meets expected growth and it has nothing to do with subgroups. It is determined by looking at a student's score from last year and calculates what it should be the next year by adding typical growth. Average growth was determined by looking at growth from each test score over two years. For example, a student who scores a 342 on MCA Mathematics in 2010 and then scores a 444 in 4th grade shows little growth. However, a 447 would be considered a positive growth score, and 441 would be a negative growth score.   Growth from all students from a school is then averaged and the result is a z-score. Z-scores range from -1.0 to +1.0. A positive z-score means your school did well. A negative z-score indicates your school performed below average (like bowling, not golf).

Achievement Gap Reduction (25 points):

In the past, AYP was not calculated for cells in schools less than 20. This meant that AYP was not determined for many students across the state because there were fewer than 20 of these students in many schools. The *Achievement Gap Reduction* (AGR) domain does not require a certain cell size – instead, a school needs only 20 unique students (Black, Asian, Hispanic, American Indian, SpEd, EL and/or FRL). If a school doesn't have 20 unique students there is no achievement gap reduction score. But for most schools an AGR is calculated.

The idea behind AGR is to work at reducing the achievement gap, even in schools with small numbers of students in various cells. We know that if students from these cells are growing slowly it indicates there's a problem. Groups are weighted with a school's larger subgroups having a greater impact on the school's AGR than smaller cells.

The AGR is determined by looking at the average growth score for these 7 subgroups and compare their growth to higher achieving subgroups (color compared to white, EL to non-EL, FRL to non-FRL, SpEd to non-SpEd). If we can exceed growth of high performing subgroups we'll see the achievement gap decline. If the growth of these students never exceeds that of the high performing groups they'll never catch up. The AGR is the opposite of growth, negative is good (golf, not bowling) – a negative score means you're subtracting from the achievement gap statewide.

Graduation (25 points, high school only):
The Graduation domain looks at percentage of students graduating from all eligible cells (20+ students). High schools are expected to reach the 85% AYP targets (these will be changing next year.)

Focused Proficiency:
In addition to the Multiple Measurement Ratings (MMR), schools are also assigned a Focus Rating (FR). This is a secondary indicator that only kicks in if your school is in the bottom 10%. The FR is determined by looking at the percentage of subgroups meeting their AYP targets.