

Glossary of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Terms:

ACCESS for ELLs—Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners; test of English language proficiency based on the WIDA (see WIDA) standards in grades K-12. This series of assessments replaced the TEAE/MN SOLOM in the spring of 2012 and satisfies a federal accountability requirement under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (see TEAE, SOLOM). Students are assessed on their English language proficiency in five areas: social and instructional language, the language of English language arts, the language of mathematics, the language of science, and the language of social studies. For each area, there are four domains tested: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Achievement Level—Summarized test score. For example, scores on the MCA-III are categorized into 4 achievement levels: Does Not Meet the Standards (D), Partially Meets the Standards (P), Meets the Standards (M), and Exceeds the Standards (E).

ACT—A standardized college entrance test administered by ACT, Inc. to aid in the selection of incoming college students. It contains multiple choice items that measure verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities and subject-area knowledge in English, mathematics, reading, and science.

Advanced Course Participation—The percent of secondary students who took and passed one or more Honors, Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or College in the School (CIS) courses. This is reported by the number of different subjects in which students took courses.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs—is an alternate assessment for English Language Learner special education students with severe cognitive disabilities who, according to their IEPs, do not qualify to take ACCESS for ELLs assessment.

Alternate Assessment—Assessment administered to special education students when the IEP team determines that the MCA, even with accommodations, is not the appropriate assessment to measure the student's knowledge and skills (See MCA-Modified and MTAS).

AMAO—Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives, also known as “English language proficiency performance targets.” It is a summary of ELL students’ performance that is calculated in order to satisfy a federal accountability requirement under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Attendance Rate—The Average Daily Attendance (ADA) divided by Average Daily Membership (ADM) as recorded in MARSS. ADA equals the number of days a student is marked in attendance divided by the number of instructional days. ADM equals the number of days a student is reported as enrolled divided by the number of instructional days.

AYP—Adequate Yearly Progress; reported annually for each Minnesota district and school by MDE (see: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/AYPStateSys/index.html>).

Campus—The database used in the district to collect student information including enrollment, demographics, address, attendance, and discipline.

Cell Size Limitation—The minimum number of students needed to measure AYP for an indicator. For participation and proficiency, the number of students in all tested grades is combined for a subject.

| Indicator | Student Group | Cell Size |
|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Participation | All students, All 8 student groups | 40 |
| Proficiency | All students, All 8 student groups | 20 |
| Attendance | All students, All 8 student groups | 40 |
| Graduation | All students, All 8 student groups | 40 |

Clusters/Subskills—(See Substrand).

Confidence Interval—The boundaries, or limits, within which the true population mean lies. A 95% confidence interval indicates that we are 95% certain that the interval contains the mean. MDE calculates a confidence

interval around the index target; schools/districts make AYP by exceeding the lower limit (score) of the confidence interval.

Continuous Enrollment—Students who were enrolled in a school (or district) for a “full academic year”—defined by MDE as enrolled in the same school/district on October 1 and on the day of the test—are considered “continuously enrolled” in that school/district.

Disaggregation—The reporting of data for a particular student group of the population (e.g., Asian American or special education) rather than for the entire population as a whole.

Dropout—A student in grade 7-12 who left school and did not reenroll by October 1 of the following fall.

Dropout Rate—There are two definitions of dropout rate in common use:

- The **Annual Dropout Rate** is the number of dropouts divided by the number of students in grades 7-12 enrolled on October 1.
- The **Four-Year Dropout Rate** is reported as a component of the SPPS Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate (see graduation rate definition below).

ELL—English Language Learners, also known as LEP (Limited English Proficient) or EL (English Learners).

Equipercentile—Method of equating tests by determining which raw scores on two instruments have the same percentile rank.

Field Test—The first stage in MDE’s three-step test development process. During field testing, the test is administered to a subset of the student population in order to determine how well the questions work. From the field test, a “pilot test” is developed using proven test items and given to a larger pool of students (see Pilot Test and Operational Test).

GRAD (MCA-III/GRAD)—The Graduation-Required Assessments for Diploma is a set of tests that all students who entered grade 8 in 2005-2006 or later must take and pass in order to graduate from a public high school in Minnesota, replacing the former BSTs. The GRAD Test of Written Composition, similar to the BST writing test, is given in grade 9. The GRAD reading and math tests are comprised of items embedded in the grade 10 and 11 MCA-III assessments (referred to as the GRAD component of the MCA-III). All three tests are retaken until a passing score is achieved on each one; however, subsequent administrations of the GRAD reading and math tests do not include all MCA-III items, only the GRAD component. GRAD was discontinued in 2013.

Graduation Rate—There are three definitions of graduation rate in common use:

- The **MDE 4-Year Graduation Rate**, defined and used by the state for NCLB purposes starting in 2011-12, counts the number of students graduating from high school within four years after entering grade nine, as a percent of all students who graduated, dropped out, are continuing high school, or have an unknown outcome. Students who transferred into the district are included in this calculation; those who transferred out are not. This calculation is based on the National Governors Association (NGA) graduation rate.
- The **NCLB Cumulative Graduation Rate**, defined and used by the state for NCLB purposes through the 2010-11 school year, counts the total number of students graduating divided by the total number of graduates and dropouts (i.e., students who were not found as re-enrolled in any other school in the state by the following fall) multiplied by 100. Students who transferred into the district are included in this calculation.
- The **SPPS Four-Year Cohort Completion Rate** is calculated by following a cohort of students who started 9th grade in an SPPS school. Four years later this cohort is divided into three groups: those who graduated in four years, those who are continuing their high school education in SPPS, and those who dropped out and did not reenroll in SPPS by the following fall. Students who transferred into or out of the district are not included in this calculation.

Growth/Trend/Gain—Calculation of change in academic achievement over time. Growth is often reported as an average for a population or sub-population of students.

Index Point—Students are assigned index points based on their achievement level in each subject on the MCA-III (see Achievement Level):

1 point—Levels M and E

½ point—Level P

0 points—Level D

Index Rate—Calculated for a group of students enrolled in a school/district on October 1, the index rate is their total number of index points divided by the total number of students multiplied by 100 (i.e., average index point). Index rates are calculated in order to make comparisons to Index Targets for the purpose of determining AYP status.

Index Target—The target index rate set by MDE each year that must be reached in order to make AYP.

Indicator—A category of data used to describe the performance of a school or district. MDE uses 4 indicators in determining AYP status—participation, proficiency, attendance, and graduation.

Infobase—The district database where graduation test (BST and GRAD) results are stored.

Item—A question on a test.

Level—See “Achievement Level.”

MAP—Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is a computer-based, adaptive achievement test in math and reading. The MAP is administered district-wide at grades 2 and 9, as well as grade 10 for students performing two or more levels below grade level in math; MAP is administered at grades 6 through 9, as well as grade 10 for students performing two or more levels below grade level in reading.

MARSS—Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System. Database of student information reported to MDE. The data come from student enrollment collected by schools in the Campus system.

MCA-III—Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments—Series III, which measure student achievement with regard to the more rigorous 2007 Minnesota Academic Standards. The administration of the MCA-III math assessment began in the spring of 2011 in grades 3-8, science (all grades) in the spring of 2012, and reading (all grades) in the spring of 2013. MCA-III math grade 11 administration will begin in the spring of 2014.

MCA-Modified (MOD-III)—Alternative assessment to the MCA-III based on modified achievement standards for a limited group of special education students deemed “persistently low performing” but who are not eligible for the MTAS (see MTAS). This test is also referred to as the “2% test,” as there is a 2% cap on allowable AYP index points contributed from MOD-III records. The administration of the MOD-III began in 2011. The MOD-III reading assessment is administered to eligible students in grades 5-8 and 10, and the MOD-III math assessment is administered to eligible students in grades 5-8 and 11. (see “Alternate Assessment Eligibility Requirements”: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/TestAdmin/MNTests/>)

MDE—Minnesota Department of Education (formerly Department of Children, Families, and Learning or CFL; see <http://education.state.mn.us/>).

MTAS-III—Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS-III) is an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards for special education students, designed to measure the extent to which students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are making progress in the general curriculum. It has been administered annually since 2007 in reading (grades 3-8 and 10) and in math (grades 3-8 and 11) (see Alternate Assessment). The MTAS science assessment, added in 2008, is administered in grades 5, 8, and once in high school (see “Alternate Assessment Eligibility Requirements” under “Document Download”: <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/TestAdmin/MNTests/>).

Mobility Index—The Mobility Index shows the stability of classrooms as a function of students both leaving and enrolling in the school during the school year. The index gives the number of occasions when students enroll after October 1, plus the number of occasions when students leave the district before June 1, as a percent of the October 1 enrollment. The index can count single students multiple times. Only traditional schools are included in the district-wide index.

MTELL—Mathematics Test for English Language Learners (MTELL) was a series of math assessments that were designed to serve as an optional accommodation for the math MCA-II for qualifying English language learners in

grades 3-8 and 11. Scores of students who took the MTELL were combined with other MCA math scores in AYP calculations. The MTELL was administered annually between 2007 and 2010.

Multi-Level Disaggregation—A method used to isolate the performance of a particular student group (e.g., Asian American, non-special education, non-ELL, free or reduced lunch), also known as “Apples to Apples” comparisons.

Multiple Measurement Rating (MMR)—Minnesota’s measurement of school performance implemented in 2012. The MMR measures proficiency, student growth, achievement gap reduction, and graduation rates. Schools earn points in each category. The percentage of possible points that a school earns is the school’s MMR (see <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/ESEA/FedAcc/041812>).

NCE—Normal Curve Equivalent. NCEs are test scores that are based on a national sample of all students taking a particular test. They range from 1 and 99 with a score of 50 being equal to the national average. Unlike percentiles, NCE scores are *equal interval*, which means that the difference between any two adjacent scores is the same. This characteristic allows NCEs to be legitimately aggregated and averaged.

NCLB—“No Child Left Behind” Act of 2001, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that President George W. Bush signed into law in January 2002. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education approved a flexibility waiver for Minnesota which allowed the state to create a new accountability system (see Multiple Measurement Rating or <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/ESEA/FedAcc/041812>).

Optional Local Purpose Assessment (OLPA)—optional MCA which is administered in grades 3-8 twice a year in fall and spring. In SPPS, it is required, not optional.

Operational Test—The third stage in MDE’s three-step test development process. Once a new test has been “field tested” and “pilot tested,” it is considered to be a complete and “operational” test. Tests are not used for AYP purposes until they are operational (see Field Test and Pilot Test).

Participation—Measure of the percent of students enrolled in a school or district that attempted the MCA-III or alternative assessment.

Percent—Not to be confused with percentile, a percent or percent score is the number of correct items divided by the total number of items multiplied by 100.

Percentile/Percentile Rank—Percentile ranks show how a student compares with others who took the test on a scale of 1 to 99. (For example, if a student scored in the 65th percentile on a test, the student performed as well or better than 65% of the other students who took the test). Percentiles differ from NCEs in that they *do not represent equal units* of achievement along the scale (e.g., the difference between percentile ranks of 5 and 10 is not the same difference in achievement as the difference between percentile ranks of 50 and 55), and therefore they cannot be legitimately aggregated or averaged.

Pilot Test—The second stage in MDE’s three-step test development process. After a new test is “field tested” and before the test is administered widely and used for accountability purposes (i.e., “operational”), it is “pilot tested” with the population of students to ensure that it is working properly (see Field Test and Operational Test).

Proficiency (MCA-III/AYP)—Defined by a cut score set by MDE. On the MCA-IIIs, any score of Level M (Meets the Standards) or E (Exceeds the Standards) is considered proficient; any score of Level D (Does Not Meet the Standards) or P (Partially Meets the Standards) is considered not proficient. For the purposes of AYP, proficiency is calculated across grades within a subject area. Proficiency calculations for AYP are based on students who were enrolled in a school (or district) for a “full academic year”—defined as enrolled in the same school/district on October 1 and on the day of the test (see “continuous enrollment”).

Raw Score—The number of items a student has answered correctly.

REA—Saint Paul Public Schools Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (see: <http://rea.spps.org/>).

RIT—Rasch unit; a unit of measurement that uses individual item difficulty values to estimate student achievement and is the score that is generated by the MAP test. RIT scores are *equal interval*, which means that

the difference between any two adjacent scores is the same; this characteristic allows RITs to be legitimately aggregated and averaged.

RIT Range—The range of scores that is one standard error of measurement around a student’s RIT score.

RIT to Reading Range—The range of scores provided in addition to the RIT score, specifically for reading tests, that relates a student’s MAP performance to his/her reading ability; this information allows educators and parents to find appropriately challenging books, periodicals, and other reading materials for students.

Safe Harbor—An AYP designation that is achieved when a school or district reduces the number of non-proficient (i.e., Level D and Level P) students by 10% from the prior year. Safe Harbor only applies to the proficiency indicator and is only calculated when the index target has not been met. A school or district can make AYP based on Safe Harbor provided that group meets the AYP target for either attendance and/or graduation rate, as appropriate. Safe harbor is not used in MMR calculations.

Scale(d) Score—A score that represents student performance across all levels and forms of the same test on a single scale. In other words, the scaled scores of second graders are generally lower than those of fifth graders. Each subject area has its own system of scaled scores. Therefore, for example, you cannot compare scaled scores on a reading test with scaled scores on a math test. However, you can use scaled scores to compare an individual student’s test performance in a single subject over time. Scaled scores can be averaged and reported within a grade level within a subject area.

SOLOM—Student Oral Language Observation Matrix, a teacher-completed oral language and listening assessment for students in grades K-12 who have been identified to receive ELL services (also referred to as the MN-SOLOM). In spring 2012, ACCESS for ELLs replaced SOLOM (see ACCESS for ELLs).

SPPS—Saint Paul Public Schools.

Stability Index—The Stability Index shows the stability of classrooms as a function of students’ continuous enrollment throughout the school year. The index gives the number of students enrolled at the school 160 days or more, as a percent of the October 1 enrollment. Only traditional schools are included in the district-wide index.

Stanine—An abbreviation for standard nine, derived from the fact that stanine scores range from a low of 1 to a high of 9. Stanines of 1, 2, or 3 are below the national average; 4, 5, or 6 are average; and 7, 8, or 9 are above average. These three clusters of stanine scores are often referred to as below average, average, and above average “ranges.”

Status—Snapshot of academic achievement at a specific point in time.

Strand/Subtest/Subarea—One of a few broad content areas within a subject of a test (e.g., Patterns, Functions, & Algebra is a strand of the Math MCA-III assessment) (see Substrand).

Student group—Group of students identified by a particular demographic characteristic. Schools and districts receive an AYP status based on the following groups and disaggregations, in addition to the “all students” group:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Black, Non-Hispanic
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Free or Reduced-Priced Lunch
- Special Education
- LEP (Limited English Proficiency)

Subject—Used to refer to a particular content area of a test (e.g., reading or math).

Substrand—One of a number of specific skill areas within a strand/subtest/subarea of a test (e.g., Algebraic Thinking is a substrand of the Patterns, Functions, & Algebra strand of the Math MCA-III assessment) (see Strand).

TEAE—Test of Emerging Academic English, given to students in grades 3-12 who have been identified to receive ELL services. In spring 2012, ACCESS for ELLs replaced TEAE (see ACCESS for ELLs definition above).

Too Few to Report—If the population is fewer than 10, we will not report results for that indicator in order to protect students from being personally identified.

Trend—Data analyses that represent performance over time.

Viewpoint—An online data mining tool used for posting and retrieving rosters of student-level test data (formerly known as Swift Knowledge).

WIDA—World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment; the WIDA Consortium is a non-profit group whose purpose is to develop standards and assessments that meet the requirements of NCLB while promoting educational equity for English language learners in 27 member states. In the spring of 2012, tests developed by the WIDA consortium replaced the TEAE and the MN SOLOM in fulfilling the Title III requirement for assessing English language proficiency in Minnesota (see ACCESS for ELLs).

Additional Resources:

Acronym Reference guide: www.spps.org/acronym_reference_guide