

Guide to the "Report on Teaching and Learning"

December 2008

The Report on Teaching and Learning (RTL) is designed to serve as a useful tool for families and to comply with the reporting requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. The information found in the RTL is from the 2007-2008 school year. The report can help parents gauge how successful their child's current school is and/or help them decide where to send their children to school. It is important to visit any schools being considered in order to get the full picture of a particular school. This guide defines some of the terms used in the RTL and provides some additional information about the data.

Accreditation Status: To be accredited means a school has met the standards of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). In order to earn this status a school must conduct a self-study and then undergo an evaluation by the NEASC, a very thorough examination process where schools are measured by the following seven standards: Mission and Expectations for Student Learning, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment of Student Learning, Leadership and Organization, School Resources for Learning, and Community Resources for Learning. The accreditation process takes approximately two years.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, all students must achieve proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics by the year 2014. Each year, improvement toward this goal is measured by performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests. For each school, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is based on the number of students taking the MCAS (participation) and their performance and improvement over time. For each subject, the school must meet annual targets for all students and all student subgroups. The subgroups include: students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, students eligible for free/reduced price school lunch, and racial/ethnic groups (African American/Black, Hispanic, Asian, White, and Native American). To make AYP, the school as a whole and each student group must meet a student participation requirement, and either the state's performance target for that subject or the school's improvement target, and an attendance (schools with grades K-8) or graduation requirement (high schools). There is no Native American subgroup listed on the report because the required sample size was not met for any school. According to the NCLB, schools that do not make AYP in ELA and/or mathematics for a student group for two or more consecutive years are considered to be identified for Improvement, Corrective Action or Restructuring (signified by a check in the NCLB category box). Such schools, if receiving Title I funds, also are required to offer a school transfer option and/or supplemental education services (tutoring).

Annual Student Dropout Rate: A student is considered to be a dropout at the end of the school year if he/she is not in school, has not graduated, and has not transferred to another school system. Students who return to the school or graduate by October 1 the following school year will not be counted as dropouts in the Final Dropouts Report.

Average Daily Student Attendance: Because this is a measure of time out of school, this percentage includes both excused and unexcused absences.

Graduation Rate: The graduation rate tracks a cohort of students from 9th grade through high school and represents the percentage of the cohort that graduate in 4 years or less. This is also part of the AYP determination for high schools.

Highly Qualified Teachers: To be considered highly qualified a teacher must have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) subject matter competency.

Individual Student Success Plan (ISSP): All students in grades 4-10 who scored at 'Warning/Failing' or 'Needs Improvement', and students in grades 11 and 12 who scored at 'Failing' on the MCAS tests should have an ISSP. Also, any student in grades K-12 who participated in a Supplemental Educational Services (SES) tutorial program must have an ISSP. This identifies the student's areas of weakness and the strategies the school will use to strengthen the student's skills. In key grades, teachers are added to reading and math classes to work more closely with these students. Students are also provided with more time to work on reading and math during the school day, and after school tutoring if they need it.

Our Staff: Staff is defined as all school employees who assist in the education process, including teachers, paraprofessionals, content coaches, guidance counselors, librarians and administrators. The staff-to-student ratio shows how many educators there are per child. Staff attendance is the percentage of days staff are present during the 180-day school year.

SAT: The SAT Reasoning Test measures students in critical reading (formerly called 'verbal'), mathematics and writing skills. Each section of the test is scored on a scale of 200-800. The SAT summary results include data for college-bound seniors who participated in the SAT testing program at any time during their high school years.

Students Promoted to Next Grade: This includes students who completed a school year of work as well as those who completed summer school successfully.

Student Mobility Rate: This indicates the percentage of students who attended only a portion of the school year at a given school. Any student who moved into or out of the school between October and June adds to the mobility rate.