

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

ALABAMA

*This profile was verified by staff of the Alabama Department of Education in April 2000.
All information was current as of that date.*

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State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.
Alabama administers the Stanford Achievement Test in grades 3 through 11 in the four core subjects. The state also administers state-developed tests based on the standards in writing in grades 5 and 7. Beginning with the 1999-2000 school year, Alabama will administer a kindergarten-readiness test to all kindergarten students, diagnostic reading tests to all first and second graders, and new 11th-grade graduation exams in the four core subjects. All of these assessments will be based on the state standards.
2. What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:
 - Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)
 1. *Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (Stanford 9)*
 2. *Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE)*
 3. *Alabama Reading Assessments*
 4. *Alabama Direct Assessments of Writing*
 5. *Alabama Early Learning Inventory*

6. *Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT).*

- Grade Levels and Subjects Tested

*The state uses the **Stanford Achievement Test (Stanford 9)** in grades 3-11. The Stanford 9 tests students in five subjects:*

1. *Reading*
2. *Mathematics*
3. *Language*
4. *Science*
5. *Social science*

*The **OLSAT** is administered in the same grades as a companion to the Stanford 9 and was adopted for use with the Stanford 9.*

*The **Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE)** has also been designed and is being administered for the first time this year (1999-2000) to eleventh graders. It covers reading comprehension, language, science and math (to later include social studies). The high school exam is geared to the 11th grade levels of knowledge.*

*The **Alabama Reading Assessments (ARA:1 and ARA:2)** are administered to students in grades 1 and 2 as an early indicator of reading ability. The **Alabama Direct Assessments of Writing (ADAW:5 and ADAW:7)** are administered in grades 5 and 7 and require students to write in the narrative, descriptive, expository and, at grade 7, the persuasive modes. The **Alabama Early Learning Inventory (AELI)** is also administered as a kindergarten-readiness test to all kindergarten students.*

- Norm or Criterion Referenced:

Stanford 9 and OLSAT are norm-referenced

AHSGE is criterion-referenced

ARA is criterion-referenced

ADAW is criterion-referenced

- Matrix or Census Testing: *Census*

- Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.

Stanford 9: Multiple choice

AHSGE: Multiple choice

ARA: Grade 1: Individually administered orally by the teacher using multiple choice and constructed response questions

*Grade 2: Multiple choice section is taken with pencil and paper in groups
Oral reading portion is constructed response and given by the teacher*

ADAW: writing prompt

AELI: individually administered orally by the classroom teacher and includes multiple choice and constructed response

- Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)

*The AHSGE is taken the first time by tenth grade students and then eleventh grade students in the spring (March). Students will have 6 chances to take the test prior to exiting school. The **early childhood assessments** are administered during the first four weeks of the school year and the **writing assessment** is administered in May. The **Stanford 9** and **OLSAT** are administered in April.*

- High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline)

*The development of the **Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE)** was begun in 1997 and includes reading comprehension, language, science and math (to later include social studies). The high school exam is geared to the 11th grade levels of knowledge (*Quality counts 99*), and it is required that any student who was a ninth grader for the first time on or after the 1997-98 school year (Class of 2001) pass the **reading and language portions** of the exam. The **math and science** implementation and graduation requirements will not come into full affect until the class of 2002 and the **social studies** until the class of 2003. This is also referred to as the pre-graduation examination when administered to grade 10 students.*

- Other Assessments – *none listed*
- Transitional or Final Assessment System - *Final*

3. Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state? Probe on:

- State Department of Education
- Commercial Testing Organization
- State teachers and administrators
- Assessment Committee
- Other

*The SDE contracted with a testing company to write the test specifications for the AHSGE and the test questions for each subject area test. The **Test Specifications Committees**, composed of teachers in the state, reviewed, modified and approved the test specifications. The items were then written for each subject area test by the testing company.*

*The **Content and Bias Review Committees** reviewed and revised all items for content and bias before they were piloted. The items for the reading, language, math, and science tests were piloted during the 1997-98 school year. The items for social studies were piloted during the 1998-99 school year.*

The Alabama educators representing schools from more than one hundred school systems served on the committees that determined the standards and objectives for the AHSGE,

determined the eligible content for the test and reviewed, revised and approved the actual items.

*The **Stanford 9** along with the **OLSAT** were developed by Harcourt Educational Measurement and are “off-the-shelf” assessments used for norm-referenced results. The other assessments listed were developed by the SDE in collaboration with a testing company that was selected through a competitive bid. They are based on the state courses of study, include content and bias reviews and were pilot tested with Alabama students.*

4. What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?

No additional state requirements have been developed for districts.

5. Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards? Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned? Probe on:
 - Refining standards
 - Revamping assessments
 - Adding components to assessments

What is the timeline for completion of the alignment?

The AHSGE is aligned to the state standards in the areas tested. In 1996 the SBE asked the SDE to develop the AHSGE so that it would be aligned with the new course requirements for graduation. The Stanford 9 and OLSAT were not developed from the state standards but there is a great deal of overlap. The other three assessments are based on the state courses of study.

6. What is the state’s approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?

See previous question.

7. How is the data included in the state assessment system used?
 - Student Grade Promotion/Retention, Graduation, Diploma Certification
 - Teacher, School and/or District accountability
 - Program Evaluation (Identify federal, state programs)
 - Identification of students for programs like Title I, state CompEd, Bilingual, etc.
 - Instructional guidance to local administrators and/or teachers
 - School improvement (e.g., preparing a school improvement plan)

The Stanford 9 is used for accountability purposes. The AHSGE will be used, as have previous high school tests, as a graduation requirement. The other three criterion-referenced exams are used for diagnostic purposes and to make informed decisions concerning curriculum and instruction.

8. Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be

implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

Social studies will be added in the spring of 2000 for the class of 2003 as a graduation requirement. The passing score for the reading, math, language, and science subject area tests will be determined after the spring 2000 administration of the AHSGE. The passing score on the social studies portion will be determined after the spring 2001 administration.

9. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment? Explain.

The development of the new high school exit exam and the other criterion-referenced assessments have been in the forefront of the assessment work done in the state in recent years. The state continues as in the past to align the assessments with state standards.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. What *exclusions* are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?

Since the spring of 1985, all students who have received a high school diploma from a public school must have passed a version of the graduation exam. Non-public school students are not required to take the exam. However, all decisions regarding participation in the student assessment program for special education and other special population students must be made on an individual basis by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team, 504 Team, or LEP Committee. Those students who can adhere to standardized procedures for the administration of the norm-referenced exams will participate.

In Alabama, an LEP student is defined as a student whose native language is not English and whose difficulty in speaking, reading, writing or understanding English is an obstacle to successful learning in a classroom where English is the only language of instruction. All decisions as to whether an LEP student will participate in the testing program must be made by the student's LEP committee. Deferment or exemption on the basis of LEP is permitted if:

- *The student has been identified as LEP according to state guidelines, and*
- *The student is currently receiving LEP services, and*
- *It is determined that the assessment is inappropriate for the student at the present time.*

An LEP student may be exempted for the state testing program for two school years from the time of enrollment. Afterwards s/he must be included.

2. What *accommodations* and/or *modifications* are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?

When determining appropriate accommodations for an assessment, the IEP team must look at the accommodations regularly being made on the student's classroom tests over time in

the subject area being tested. Accommodations on state assessments must be a part of the student's regular instructional program and those included on the accommodations checklist. For special education students, accommodations that do not change standardized procedures are approved. These include scheduling, setting, format and equipment accommodations as specified in the IEP/504 Plan Accommodations Checklist. The accommodations specified under criterion-referenced accommodations also include recording accommodations.

When determining appropriate accommodations for an LEP student on an assessment, the LEP committee must look at the accommodations regularly being made on the student's classroom tests over time in the subject area being tested. Accommodations on state assessments must be a part of the student's regular instructional program and those included on the accommodations checklist. These include scheduling and setting accommodations for the Stanford 9, as well as format, equipment and recording accommodations for the grade-level criterion testing and the AHSGE.

3. Does the state provide assessments in *languages other than English*? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?

No such tests exist for the 1999-2000 school year.

4. Does the state provide *alternative assessments* for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?

An alternative assessment is being developed currently for students in special education, but no such test exists at this time.

5. Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?

More than 2,100 special education students in the tenth grade in 1999 completed the AHSGE. According to the state, 7,095 more special education students took the Stanford 9 in 1999 than in 1998. And, for the second year, all special education students taking the test had their scores included in the school, system and state summaries. The state goal is to have fewer than 2% of students participating in an alternative form of assessment or not participating.

6. Are changes planned for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

The state is planning to develop an alternative assessment for special education students.

Performance Standards

1. How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?

The passing score for the reading, math, language, and science subject area tests will be determined after the spring 2000 administration of the AHSGE. The passing score on the social studies portion will be determined after the spring 2001 administration. However, teachers are responsible for assisting students with any objective in each subject in which they have less than 75% of the items correct as indicated by the pre-graduation exam.

The Alabama writing assessment is scored as levels 1-4 with 4 as the highest score. The levels of performance on the Stanford 9 have not been developed for students by the state with regard to proficiency. Schools, however, are described as academic clear, caution or alert depending on the Stanford 9 scores.

The early childhood assessments are reported in three levels:

- *Needs Developing*
- *Developing*
- *Area of Strength.*

2. Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures (e.g. 70% of students in Maryland pass the MSPAP)?

- *A school or school system is classified as **Academic Clear** if a majority of the students score at the 40th percentile or above (Stanines 5-9) on the Stanford 9.*
- *A school or school system is classified as **Academic Caution** if a majority of its students score below the 40th percentile (Stanines 1-4) or a majority of the system's schools score in Academic Caution or Academic Alert on the Stanford 9.*
- *A school or school system is classified as **Academic Alert** if a majority of its students score below the 23rd percentile (Stanines 1-3), if the school system or school previously scored in Academic Caution but failed to meet the required improvement, or a majority of the system's schools score in Academic Alert on the Stanford 9.*

3. How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?

The Stanford 9 is used to determine the three classifications listed above.

4. Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?

*All students **except** special education students are included in these calculations.*

5. Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

Standards may be modified if the state legislature modifies the law requiring accountability for school systems and schools to be based on the results of a norm-referenced test.

6. What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?

Academic Caution: 3 districts (2.3%) and 88 schools (6.8%)
Academic Alert: 5 districts (3.9%) and 91 schools (7.0%)
Alert 1: 43 schools (3.3%)
Alert 2: 47 schools (3.6%)
Alert 3: 1 school (.08%)

Reporting Performance Data

1. Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:

- Student reports

Students are provided with the results of all assessments. The LEAs are responsible for notifying students and parents of the results.

- School and District reports

1999 was the third year that report cards were issued on the state's 1300 schools and 128 school districts. School and district scores for the assessments are available to the public.

Alabama issues report cards that give letter grades on five national indicators:

1. *Stanford 9*
2. *Achievement/ability comparison*
3. *ACT test scores*
4. *Projects four-year dropout rate*
5. *Per-pupil expenditures.*

Eight report card items grade schools and school districts in Alabama anywhere from an A to an F on indicators ranging from academic achievement to financial support. Numbers or percentages are used to represent enrollment, average daily attendance and system average total revenues. These along with the five indicators above are used to grade schools. (See the State Superintendent's Report Card below for the complete list of 16 indicators also included at the school and district levels as applicable.)

- State reports

*The State Superintendent's Report Card provides a summary of the state's educational progress over the past year and contains 16 key education indicators that measure how well **students, school and districts** compare statewide and nationally. These reports are compiled for the **state, each school and each district**, and include:*

1. *Stanford 9 total battery for grades 3-11*
2. *Stanford 9 average battery*
3. *Stanford 9 improvement*
4. *Average daily attendance*
5. *Achievement/ability comparison*
6. *Writing tests*
7. *ACT test scores*
8. *Projects four-year dropout rate*
9. *Enrollment*
10. *AHSGE*
11. *System-current expenditures per child in ADA*
12. *F/R lunch eligibility*
13. *Professional certification*
14. *System average total revenues*
15. *Mills equivalent*
16. *System yield per mill per child*

2. How are the data distributed? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?

Data are released during a press conference and sent to districts; it is also listed in multiple forms on the state web site.

3. At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards)?

Data are reported at school and school system levels as part of accountability reporting.

4. Does trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from "1996-97 on")?

1999 was the third and fourth years for school and district report cards respectively, including Stanford 9 data. The high school exam changed in 1999-2000 so data from that exam is not consistent across years.

5. How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?

*All special education students taking the test **have their scores included in school, system, and state summaries, but they are not used for accountability calculations.** The 1999 results include 49,794 special education students and exclude no students who took the test.*

6. What are the state's requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?

Schools and districts are encouraged by the state to use data for school improvement. Academic Caution and Academic Alert schools and school systems are required to submit school improvement plans.

7. Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?

No such plans were indicated.

8. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.

No significant issues were reported or addressed.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.

Along with the use of report cards with letter grades for all its schools, the state also holds students accountable for passing the high school exit exam, and places schools and districts in categories according to their performance on the Stanford 9.

2. What are the characteristics of the state accountability system? Organize the response into the following subsections:

- Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions

High school students are required to pass a graduation examination in order to graduate.

- School and District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions

*In the summer of 1999, the state sent its first-ever intervention team into an academically lagging school. **Stanford 9** scores are used in assigning an **academic status** for schools and school systems. Special education students' scores are not included in classifying a school or system as **Academic Clear**, **Academic Caution** or **Academic Alert**.*

- *A school or school system is classified as **Academic Clear** if a majority of the students score at the 40th percentile or above.*

- A school or school system is classified as **Academic Caution** if a majority of its students score below the 40th percentile or a majority of the system's schools score in Academic Caution. Three school systems and 88 schools are classified as Academic Caution.
- A school or school system is classified as **Academic Alert** if a majority of its students score below the 23rd percentile, if the school system or school previously scored in Academic Caution but failed to meet the required improvement, or a majority of the system's schools score in Academic Alert. Five school systems and 91 schools are classified as Academic Alert. **Forty-three schools are classified as Alert 1, 47 as Alert 2, and 1 as Alert 3.**

The faculties and administrators of each of the 43 Alert 1 schools engage in a self-study to examine the reasons for low student achievement and will **develop a school improvement plan**. If test scores do not improve, these schools will be placed in Alert 2 status. The five school systems that are identified as Academic Alert 2 actually had a majority of their students scoring in Caution, but because this is the second year they failed in Caution improvement, they are identified as **Alert 2**.

The faculties and administrators of each of the Alert 2 school systems and schools work with a **team appointed by the State Superintendent of Education** during the 1999-2000 school year. The state-appointed team will consist of a combination of State Department of Education specialists and proven educators from successful local schools. If test scores do not improve by 2000, these schools/systems will be placed in **Alert 3 status**.

Alert 2 schools and school systems must show improvement or be faced with state intervention. According to the State Superintendent, "Our statewide plan for educational progress in low-performing schools works. The State Department of Education teams, including special services teachers from successful schools working hand-in-hand with local Alert 2 school staffs, enabled 33 of the 34 schools to show improvement. Our challenge between now and April 2000 is to work with the 47 Alert 2 schools and the 5 school systems to achieve the same results we did this year."

One high school was recommended for **state intervention** by Superintendent Richardson. The recommendation was made to the State Board of Education on July 13, 1999. The state will place a full assistance team in the school and work with the local superintendent, school board, school staff, and the community to assure every step possible is taken to improve student academic performance at the high school.

3. What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?
 - Relative growth
 - Absolute target
 - Narrowing the Gap between high and low achievers
 - Other

An absolute target must be reached on the Stanford 9 in the state accountability system.

4. Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?

*Stanford 9 scores are used in assigning an **academic status** for schools and school systems. **Special education students' scores are not included in classifying a school or system as Academic Clear, Academic Caution or Academic Alert.***

5. How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?

Title I and non-Title I work with the same basic accountability system. See Title I section for the definition of adequate yearly progress.

6. Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?

Subgroup performance is not included as a separate indicator at this time.

7. Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?

Charter schools and non-public schools are not included in the system.

8. Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

None were mentioned by the respondent.

9. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.

No specific issues were addressed.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?

*Schools are evaluated based on their scores on the **Stanford Achievement Test-9th Edition**. If most students score below the 40th percentile, a school is placed on "academic caution." If students score below the 23rd percentile, the school goes on "academic alert."*

2. Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?

The state determines academic status for both schools and districts.

3. What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?

*The legislature in 1999 appropriated \$4 million for high schools to conduct remediation programs. In addition, the faculties and administrators of each of the Alert 2 school systems and schools work with a **team appointed by the State Superintendent of Education** during the 1999-2000 school year. The state-appointed team will consist of a combination of State Department of Education specialists and proven educators from successful local schools.*

*The SDE established a system of School Support Teams to work with LEAs and schools. The school in the **state intervention program** will have a **full assistance team** in the school and work with the local superintendent, school board, school staff, and the community to assure every step possible is taken to improve student academic performance.*

4. Who provides the state assistance?

The assistance is provided primarily by a School Assistance Team that is assigned to the LEA. The team is comprised of SDE personnel; special services teachers, full-time "distinguished" teachers who are "on loan" to the SDE from other LEAs; and school support team members (SSTMs), part-time contract SDE employees who have expertise in various areas of education. Assistance may be provided, also, by the LEA's regional in-service center, the Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center (SECAC), and/or the Southeast Region Vision for Education (SERVE). Schools that are implementing CSRD programs receive additional technical from their model providers.

The School Support Teams are staffed by SDE instructional specialists and Special Services Teachers. SDE supervisory personnel serve as team leaders and are full-time SDE employees funded by state and federal funds. Special Services Teachers (SSTs) are full-time teachers located regionally throughout the state. These teachers are nominated by the LEA superintendents and must pass the interview and selection process. Each is released from his or her LEA for one year of service.

The School Support Team Members (SSTMs) are retired educators selected for their expertise in curriculum, instruction, assessment and site-based management. They are part-time and are funded through Title I dollars to generally work 50-100 days per year. These SSTMs work only with Title I schools that are designated as Academically Alert 2 to design, implement and monitor school improvement plans and assist with schoolwide programs.

Ten school support teams are assigned to geographic regions of the state. Each team has SDE representatives specializing in a number of instructional and administrative areas. SSTs and SSTMs are assigned to each team based on regional needs. While all ten have SSTs, only those with Title I schools in need of improvement (7 regions in 1997) have SSTMs.

5. Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?

Although Title I and non-Title I schools identified as low performing are provided with the same structure of assistance, two separate types of support staff are provided (see above: SSTs work with all schools while SSTMs only work within Title I. In both cases, this support is targeted at schools that are in need of improvement.

6. Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?

A school gets out of school improvement by making the academic clear status or progressive adequate yearly progress in the case of Title I for two consecutive years after having been identified for improvement.

7. Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare?

The faculties and administrators of each of the Alert 1 schools engage in a self-study to examine the reasons for low student achievement and will develop a school improvement plan.

8. Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

No changes were specified.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?

The Title I accountability system is based on Alabama's academic accountability system. The basis for the state system is student achievement as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition. At present, SAT9 scores are the sole criterion for AYP. This is couched in legislation, Act 95-313, and the state department has been unsuccessful, thus far, in getting that requirement modified. The SDE has proposed that the state's writing assessments be incorporated into the definition of AYP, but this has not been approved.

2. What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:

- Title I schools and non-Title I schools
- Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools
- Districts

Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?

At present, the definitions of AYP are the same for Title I and non-Title I schools, regardless of type or size, and Alabama does not have any charter schools. The accountability system will be considered as "final" with determinations and actions effective with the 2000-2001

school year. The Title I and state academic accountability system definitions are the same with exceptions noted.

AYP is described in terms of four proficiency levels and SAT9 percentiles and stanines:

- *Below Basic/Alert or Below Proficient, Percentiles 1-22, Stanines 1-3;*
- *Basic/Caution, Percentiles 23-39, adds Stanine 4;*
- *Proficient/Clear, Percentiles 40-76, Stanines 5-6; and*
- *Advanced Clear or Above Proficient, Percentiles 77-99, Stanines 7-9.*

The state system applies only three categories: Alert (Stanines 1-3), Caution (Stanines 1-4), and Clear (Stanines 5-9). Scores from the spring 1996 administration of the SAT9 were used as the baseline data for the accountability system. At that time, the state "wiped the slate clean" for Title I purposes so that the accountability system would be coordinated with regard to identification of schools for school improvement (SI) and providing technical assistance, etc.

3. What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the district plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?

Schools/LEAs that are not making AYP are notified during the summer following each school year. The information is included on an Annual LEA Academic Status Report that is sent to each LEA. The LEA is responsible for providing the report to each of its schools. During the fall of each year, the SDE disseminates an annual report card, which includes SAT9 scores, academic status, and other indicators of progress, for the State, each LEA, and for each school.

4. What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?

During the summer, each LEA that has one or more schools that have failed to make their AYP for two consecutive years is notified that the schools have been identified for Title I school improvement. Notification is made by letter to each LEA superintendent from the State Superintendent of Education. The letter includes information about how the schools came to be identified for SI, responsibilities of the LEA and school related to SI, technical assistance available for developing, implementing, and monitoring school improvement plans (SIPs), and what the school must accomplish to be removed from SI status. Beginning in summer 2000, the letter will be sent to the LEA superintendent with instructions that the LEA is responsible for identifying/notifying each of its schools of having met AYP; being identified as a Title I Distinguished School, i.e., having met AYP for past 3 years and making progressive improvement in student achievement, plus some other variables; or, failure to make AYP for 2 consecutive years and identification for Title I school improvement. The LEA is responsible for the identification and improvement efforts of each of its schools.

Each school identified for SI is required to develop and implement a school improvement plan. A school gets out of SI by making progressive AYP for two consecutive years after having been identified for improvement.

5. What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?

Direct (on-site) and indirect (brokered services) technical assistance is provided to all schools identified for school improvement. The School Support Team Members (SSTMs):

- 1. Carry out school assistance team work at the direction of the Team Leader or the Federal Programs School Improvement Specialist*
- 2. Provide information and technical assistance to schoolwide programs*
- 3. Work with schools on school improvement and schoolwide planning*
- 4. Review the progress of schools in enabling students to meet state standards.*

These personnel also attend their own professional development sessions to prepare for and improve the services they provide.

6. Who provides the assistance?

The School Support Team Members (SSTMs) are retired educators selected for their expertise in curriculum, instruction, assessment and site-based management. They are part-time and are funded through Title I dollars to generally work 50-100 days per year. These SSTMs work only with Title I schools that are designated as Academically Alert 2 to design, implement and monitor school improvement plans and assist with schoolwide programs.

Ten school support teams are assigned to geographic regions of the state. Each team has SDE representatives specializing in a number of instructional and administrative areas. Special Services Teachers (SSTs) and SSTMs are assigned to each team based on regional needs. While all ten have SSTs, only those with Title I schools in need of improvement (7 regions in 1997) have SSTMs.

7. Have waivers played a role in this process?

No, waivers have not played a role.

8. Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

The SDE has proposed the addition of the state's writing assessments to the AYP criteria. Also, the SDE has a piece of legislation under consideration at this time to add some criterion-referenced tests to the statewide student assessment system and to reduce the grades at which the SAT9 is required. After cut scores have been set for the new graduation exam, the SDE will propose that that measure be added to the AYP definition as well.

Beginning with scores from the spring 2000 administration of the SAT9, the Advanced/Clear or Above Proficient proficiency levels will be included in calculations of AYP. This will cause schools to attend to the continued improvement of students who score within the range of Stanines 5-9 on the SAT9. Also, the proficiency levels will be applied not only at the LEA, school, and student level, but to the target population groups identified through the disaggregation of assessment data; i.e., Title I vs. non-Title, LEP students, migrant students, Indian students, students with disabilities, etc.

9. Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?

Presently, there is alignment between the two systems.

10. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.

Providing evidence that the content standards, performance standards, and assessment measures are aligned has been a challenge for the state. This, according to the respondent, is typical in states that have a mandated, legislated, off-the-shelf norm-referenced instrument as the basis for the state's accountability system. Also, responding to surveys and research queries to accommodate USDOE work was listed as a challenge.

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Title I

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