



Closing the Achievement Gap

General Information

One of the measures in the state's new accountability system for schools is based on closing the achievement gap on state reading and math assessments. The achievement gap is identified by comparing the state assessment performance of the lowest performing 30 percent of students in your school to a state benchmark that represents the highest performing 30 percent of school buildings in the state.



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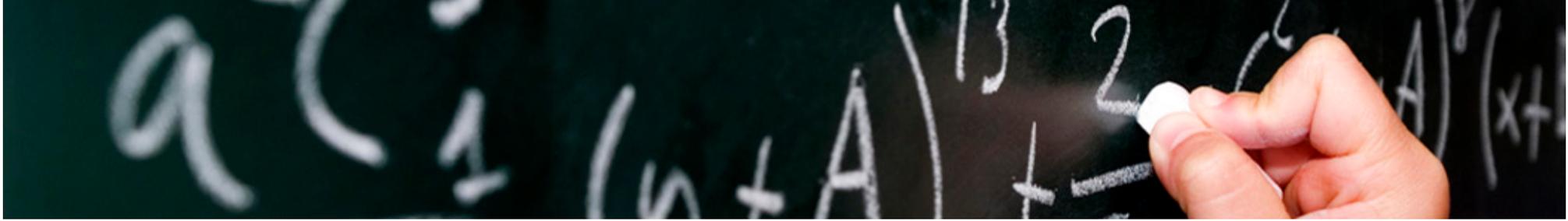
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Setting the State Benchmark

A benchmark is a fixed goal that is ambitious, but achievable. In this case, the benchmark represents the highest performing schools in the state on state assessments in reading and math. A separate state benchmark is determined for reading and for math.

School-level performance on the state assessments is determined by using the Assessment Performance Index (API). The API assigns a point value to each of the five performance levels on the state assessments. For example, the “meets standard” performance level is assigned a point value of 500. Ten students scoring at the meets standard level would earn 500 points each and contribute 5,000 points to the school’s total. Higher performance levels earn more points and lower performance levels earn fewer points. The total points for each performance level are added together and then divided by the total number of students in your school who took the assessment. The resulting number is your school’s API score (see Measuring Achievement for School Accountability brochure).

To set the state benchmarks, an API score is calculated for each school in the state using assessment data from the most recent four years. The API score for the building at the 70th percentile across the state (meaning the building has a higher API score than 70 percent of all Kansas school buildings) becomes the state benchmark.

Establishing an AMO for Closing the Achievement Gap

To determine the Annual Measurable Objective, or AMO, for closing the achievement gap it is necessary to first determine the difference in performance of your school’s lowest-performing 30 percent of students as compared to the state benchmark. To do this, an API is calculated for your school’s lowest performing 30 percent of students using the two most recent years of assessment results.

The difference between that group’s API score and the state benchmark is your school’s gap score. The goal for your school is to reduce the building achievement gap in half within six years. Your school’s AMO for closing the achievement gap is determined by dividing your school’s gap score in half, and then dividing that number by six. The resulting number is how much the gap score should be reduced for each of the next six years.

For instance, the state benchmark in math is an API score of 719. Let’s say the API for the lowest performing 30 percent of students in your school is 419. The AMO calculation for your school would look like this:

$$719 - 419 = 300 \text{ (overall gap)}$$

$$300 \div 2 = 150 \text{ (six-year goal)}$$

$$150 \div 6 = 25 \text{ (AMO)}$$

In this example, the AMO for your school would be to reduce the building gap score by 25 API points.

Schools are only required to meet one of the four performance AMOs to be considered making progress.



For more information about the Closing the Achievement Gap AMO or the state’s accountability system, visit the ESEA Flexibility Waiver page at www.ksde.org.