

State of the Schools Report 2012 Glossary of Terms



This document is intended to be a quick reference guide for terms used in the State of the Schools 2012 report.

Value-Added Measures (VAM)- Value-added measures isolate a school's contribution to student academic growth over time, whereas traditional measures of school achievement, such as Adequate Yearly Progress, look at student attainment levels at a single point in time. We know that many factors can impact student performance and growth. VAMs take into consideration student characteristics that are known to impact performance that are outside the control of schools

The following definitions relate to VAM:

- **Composite**-An overall combined score that includes subjects such as Math, English/Language Arts (ELA), Science, and, when appropriate, Social Studies.
- **Confidence interval**- A confidence interval tells you the range in which a school's VAM could fall. Within that range, a school's VAM score is the most likely value of the school's contribution to student growth.
- **"Significantly above state average"**- If a school's VAM score is greater than 50 (the state average) and the confidence interval does not cross 50, the score is considered to be significantly above the state average.
- **"Significantly below state average"**- If a school's VAM score is less than 50 (the state average) and the confidence interval does not cross 50, the score is considered to be significantly below the state average.

Tripod Student Perceptions Survey- the Tripod student survey is a research-based, classroom-level analysis and reporting system. Now in its eleventh generation, hundreds of schools and thousands of classrooms in more than 25 states have participated in this survey. Tripod asks students to give feedback on specific aspects of the classroom experience, organized around seven elements of teaching practice. The questions focus on specific statements such as, "Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time." In addition, the survey asks students to assess their level of engagement around several student engagement targets, both individual and collective. These include such targets as trust, cooperation, ambitiousness, and diligence. In 2011–12, Pittsburgh Public Schools administered over 50,000 surveys District-wide.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status- A statewide accountability system mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which requires each state to ensure that all schools and districts make Adequate Yearly Progress. AYP criteria encompass **three areas: Test participation rate, School attendance or graduation rate, and Achieving proficiency**. This assessment evaluates how well our students are achieving overall.

The following definitions relate to AYP status:

- **Making progress**- After missing AYP in the previous year, a school is "making progress" if it passed AYP in the current year, the first of 2-year probation period. The school must pass AYP again the next year to be considered back on track. If a Title 1 school, it must offer School Choice (see definition below).
- **Warning**- School did not meet AYP measures for the first time in current year. Warning means that the school fell short of the AYP measures but has another year to achieve them.

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- **School Improvement 1-** School did not meet AYP measures for two consecutive years in the same subject. Title 1 schools only: Students will be eligible for school choice. School officials will develop an improvement plan to turn around the school. The School will receive technical assistance to help it get back on the right track.
- **School Improvement 2-** School did not meet AYP measures for two consecutive years in the same subject. Title 1 schools only: Students will be eligible for school choice. School officials will develop an improvement plan to turn around the school. The School will receive technical assistance to help it get back on the right track. The school will need to offer supplemental education services such as tutoring. The district will be responsible for paying for these additional resources.
- **Corrective Action 1-** School did not meet AYP measures for two consecutive years in the same subject. Title 1 schools only: Students will be eligible for school choice. School officials will develop an improvement plan to turn around the school. The School will receive technical assistance to help it get back on the right track. The school will need to offer supplemental education services such as tutoring. The district will be responsible for paying for these additional resources. Schools are eligible for various levels of technical assistance and are subject to escalating consequences (e.g., changes in curriculum, leadership, professional development)
- **Corrective Action 2-** School did not meet AYP measures for two consecutive years in the same subject. Title 1 schools only: Students will be eligible for school choice. School officials will develop an improvement plan to turn around the school. The School will receive technical assistance to help it get back on the right track. The school will need to offer supplemental education services such as tutoring. The district will be responsible for paying for these additional resources. Schools are eligible for various levels of technical assistance and are subject to escalating consequences (e.g., changes in curriculum, leadership, professional development). School is subject to governance changes such as reconstitution, chartering, and privatization.
- **School Choice-** Students who attend Title 1 schools that did not make AYP (part of the No Child Left Behind federal guidelines) and is currently in any level of School Improvement or Corrective Action must be given the choice to transfer to another District school that is not in School Improvement or Corrective Action (the consequences for not making AYP).

Promise-Readiness- refers to a student's eligibility for The Pittsburgh Promise® scholarship; Requirements include: Be a student in the district and a resident of Pittsburgh continuously since at least the 9th grade; Earn a minimum of a 2.5 GPA; maintain a minimum attendance record of 90% (excluding excused absences).

Proficiency- According to the PA Department of Education, proficiency reflects satisfactory academic performance. Proficient work indicates a solid understanding and adequate display of the skills included in the Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards.

PSSA- Pennsylvania System of School Assessment- A statewide assessment to evaluate student progress and proficiency in Math, Reading and Science. The PSSA's are administered to students in grades 3-8 and grade 11 in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. They are also a contributing factor to the District's AYP score.

PASA- Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment- A statewide alternate assessment designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. By administering the PASA to students with severe disabilities, schools achieve compliance with federal laws and the Pennsylvania School Code that require that all students participate in the statewide accountability system.

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PSSA-M- Pennsylvania System of School Assessment Modified- Administered from 2009-2012, the PSSA-M is an adapted version of the PSSA's for student with cognitive disabilities. The District administered this exam in 2012, but no longer administers this version per state changes to testing regulations for special education students. **Special education students who are unable to fully participate in the PSSA will take the PASA version of the assessment.**

Achievement Disparity- Achievement disparity refers to the disparity between African American and white students on a variety of educational measures. While disparities also exist between other racial subgroups and in relationship to the socioeconomic status of students, the difference between African American and white students on key measures is the focus of the information provided here.

Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey- an annual on-line survey administered to all licensed school professionals, based on a validated set of questions, through which respondents share perceptions related to student achievement and teacher retention, focused on the presence of critical teaching conditions across key constructs including: Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, and Instructional Practices and Support.

Parent Survey-Administered once a year, this survey gives Pittsburgh Public Schools families an opportunity to provide feedback that will help us understand the needs of District and respond to those needs. This survey uses a variety of measures to evaluate the District's families' needs, including asking parents if they would recommend their child's school and the District to someone else.

Chronically Absent- a student missing more than 10% of school days for any reason, excused or unexcused. Chronically absent students are more likely to have lower academic success and are at higher risk of dropping or failing out of school.

Excused Absence- An absence from school or class due to illness or other urgent reason, hospitalization or health care, religious holiday, bereavement, weather emergency, school-approved activities, principal approved absence or involuntary exclusion. Parents must submit the appropriate paperwork for an excused absence within three calendar days of the absence or it will be an unexcused absence.

Unexcused Absence- Truancy, class cutting, or any absence not covered under the categories mentioned above is considered an unexcused absence.