

School Progress Index (SPI) Tutorial

What is the School Progress Index?

1. How is Maryland's new system better?

Maryland's new accountability system improves on the former AYP status model by focusing on the progress the school is making in relation to its own goals, not just on its status in relation to statewide goals. The former accountability system, built in response to No Child Left Behind, looked at all schools in relation to state goals. The new accountability system helps educators gauge how well a school is progressing in its quest to improve performance for all students. The yardstick for every school is set against its own ability to reduce the portion of students not achieving proficiency by half in six years, with annual improvement targets set for every school individually.

The new system has very high expectations for students and schools, but it is set against goals that are very rigorous, yet more attainable and achievable for schools. It focuses very strongly on new measures of a school's ability to close gaps between its highest performing student groups and its lowest. It focuses on a school's ability to show significant growth from year to year. And it also emphasizes the importance for high schools on their ability to graduate students on time college- and career-ready.

The new system is the next logical step for Maryland and other states around the nation. With the development of new data tools for following the progress of an individual student and the advent of more sophisticated teaching and testing tools, states now have the ability to provide volumes of useful data to schools to help guide learning for individual students and instructional program improvements for schools.

The new accountability system does away with the School Improvement labels that were a requirement of No Child Left Behind. Schools in the School Improvement Process in Maryland were labeled failing and provided federally mandated requirements and assistance. The new accountability system still assures help and mandates

engagement in schools that are not successful, but it does so without the traditional failing labels and without one size fits all interventions.

School leaders and parents will now have web tools that will help reveal the facts about every school's progress. If used properly, every school improvement team will know what is working and what is not and can begin mapping out next steps. While one might expect more extensive work ahead in some schools woefully short of its own expectations, virtually every school will find opportunities to celebrate progress in some areas and to work on needs in others.

For example, some schools appear overall to be serving students well, but the School Progress Index data and the related components may reveal gaps. Some student groups in some high performing schools are progressing very slowly while other groups in the same schools are overshadowing the challenges some student groups are facing. At the same time, some schools previously labeled overall as failing have much to celebrate and build upon by meeting growth targets or closing the achievement gaps. But more importantly, schools throughout the school progress spectrum now will have better conditions for and more reasonable expectations to guide the work of leaders and communities with their schools.