

SY 2017-2018

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRESS REPORT

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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## **What is the purpose of the Alternative Education Progress Report (AEPR), and how is it different from the District's School Progress Report (SPR)?**

The AEPR is the School District of Philadelphia's tool for understanding the performance of its alternative programs across multiple dimensions, from academic achievement to college and career readiness.

The AEPR differs from the SPR in ways that reflect the unique structures and goals of alternative programs. More specifically, the AEPR:

- Includes different performance metrics designed to be more relevant to the types of alternative programs being evaluated;
- Is scored using different performance expectations and methods; and
- Uses different terminology to categorize program performance.

## **How do alternative programs compare to traditional schools receiving an SPR?**

Alternative programs cannot be compared to traditional schools using scores from the AEPR and SPR. Scores from the AEPR reflect how programs are performing relative to performance targets established in program contracts; scores from the SPR reflect the percentage of points earned.

Additionally, while many metrics on the AEPR appear to align with those on the SPR, the

AEPR metrics are often calculated using different definitions and business rules and are scored using different performance expectations.

## **What are the different AEPR types?**

There are five different types of the AEPR, each intended to evaluate performance on metrics that are most relevant to the type of program and its unique purpose:

- AEDY – for Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth programs designed to serve students who have committed serious Code of Conduct violations and to assist such students with transitioning back to non-disciplinary schools.
- Accelerated – for programs that allow students who are overage and under-credited to get back on track.
- Continuation – for programs that serve middle grade students in need of smaller school settings that provide intensive academic and social supports.
- Dual Enrollment – for programs that allow students to earn credits towards their high school diploma and a college degree simultaneously.
- EOP – for Educational Options Programs designed to serve students who are older than 17 (no upper age limit), have earned some high school credits, and are not enrolled in a regular day school.

## **How are school scores calculated on the AEPR?**

Schools receive two separate overall scores:

- The “unweighted” score reflects the percentage of metrics for which the program met or exceeded mutually agreed-upon, by SDP and the program provider,

performance targets. Contracted providers adhere to these targets in their contract.

- The “weighted” score is intended to provide a fuller picture of how near the program’s performance was to the established targets. This score provides extra credit for metrics on which the program reached the “exceptional” category as well as partial credit for metrics on which the program fell into the “near target” category.

### **Why do schools receive two overall scores?**

Including both absolute performance (unweighted score) and relative performance (weighted score) is intended to provide a more nuanced picture of how a school is performing.

### **How are overall scores grouped into categories?**

Overall categories are based on the percentage of targets for which schools met or exceeded expectations (unweighted score).

- A label of **Excelling** indicates that a school has met 75% or more of targets;
- A label of **Achieving** indicates that a school has met 50-74% of targets;
- A label of **Approaching** indicates that a school has met 25-49% of targets;
- A label of **Underperforming** indicates that a school has met less than 25% of targets.

### **How are the four performance tiers – Exceptional, Target, Near Target, and Did Not Meet – determined?**

These categories are relative to the performance targets established during contract negotiations with contracted alternative providers in summer 2017.

Three performance categories – “Unacceptable”, “Target/Mid-Range”, and “Exceptional” – are explicitly included in the

program contracts. For the AEPR, the “Unacceptable” category has been divided into two categories:

- Near Target – within 20% of the Target score.
- Did Not Meet – more than 20% from the Target score.

For example, the target for Credit Accumulation in Accelerated programs is 75%. Consequently, in order to receive a Near Target rating for that metric, a program must have a score of at least 60% for the Credit Accumulation metric [75% - (75% \* 20%) = 60%]

The cut-points required for each tier and program type can be found in Appendix B of the AEPR User Guide.

### **What are the minimum and maximum scores on the AEPR?**

The unweighted score is the percentage of targets for which the program met or exceeded expectations. Therefore, the minimum and maximum scores are 0% and 100%, respectively.

The weighted score provides additional credit for metrics on which the program fell into the Exceptional tier. Consequently, the minimum and maximum scores for the weighted score are 0% and 150%, respectively.

### **What are the weights allocated to each performance tier for the weighted overall score?**

- A tier of **Did Not Meet** has a weight of 0;
- A tier of **Near Target** has a weight of 0.5;
- A tier of **Target** has a weight of 1.0;
- A tier of **Exceptional** has a weight of 1.5

### **Is there more information on how each metric is calculated?**

Yes. The AEPR User Guide, available on the District Performance Office's website, explains which program types receive which metrics, how those metrics are calculated, and which students are included in each metric.

### **How was the demographic information on the front page calculated?**

Information on black/Latino students and English learners was taken from the District's Student Information System. Information on low-income students was taken from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's [Community Eligibility Provision webpage](#). The remaining demographic information was self-reported by programs.

Keep in mind that the demographic information may underreport true rates for several reasons, including:

- Students may not be eligible for the benefits that classify them as low-income due to age or other factors;
- Schools were not required to track information on whether students were pregnant or parenting, justice-involved, or homeless and so may not be able to provide a full count;
- Students may not wish to identify themselves to their school as falling into one or more of these demographic categories.

### **How does the demographic information on the front page factor into a school's score?**

The demographic information does not factor into a school's score or performance expectations. It is presented to provide an overview of the types of students served by a particular program.

### **How has the AEPR changed from previous years?**

Several changes were implemented to the SY 2017-2018 AEPR to better reflect the types and performance of programs evaluated:

- 1) Introduction of a new report type to evaluate Continuation programs;
- 2) Removal of the informational Six-Year Cohort Graduation Rate metric for Accelerated programs;
- 3) Shift to a minimum sample size of 20 students instead of 25 for a program to be eligible for a metric;
- 4) Removal of reporting on unconfirmed students; and
- 5) Decrease in use of self-reported data.

### **Who are unconfirmed students, and why is that information no longer reported?**

Alternative programs are asked to confirm whether they, in fact, served each of the students who were recorded as attending the program during the academic year. Unconfirmed students are those who the school says it did not serve. Historically, these students have been removed from all calculations on the AEPR.

Beginning with the SY 2017-2018 AEPR, the list of students identified by schools as unconfirmed was compared to other data sources. Any students marked as unconfirmed but who (for high school students) attempted credits or (for middle school students) earned course grades were considered to be served by the program and subsequently included in all calculations.

### **Why don't some alternative programs have an AEPR?**

Justice programs, such as Pennypack House School and the Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center School, do not receive an

AEPR because these programs operate under especially unique circumstances; consequently, limited academic data is available and limited climate data is applicable to these contexts.

### **How are survey metrics scored?**

The AEPR contains several survey metrics that use data from the SY 2017-2018 District-Wide Parent & Guardian Survey and the SY 2107-2018 District-Wide Student Survey:

- 1) Parent/Guardian Survey: Climate Rating, for Accelerated and AEDY programs
- 2) Student Survey: Climate Rating
- 3) Student Survey: College and Career Rating

The Parent/Guardian Participation Rate is also reported for Accelerated and AEDY programs. This participation rate represents the percentage of parents/guardians of students in grades K-12 who complete the survey. A separate parent/guardian response is required for each student enrolled at the school.

For the Parent/Guardian Climate Rating and the student survey metrics, a school receives a score of 0 if it does not meet the minimum participation threshold. The participation threshold for the parent/guardian survey is 10%. The participation threshold for the student survey is the greater of 25% of all students in grades 3-12 or 50 (e.g., the participation threshold for a school that serves 100 students in grades 3-12 is 50, while the participation threshold for a school that serves 600 students in grades 3-12 is 150).

The ratings are presented as the percent of most positive responses.

### **Which questions are included in the survey metrics?**

The survey metrics are developed by the [Office of Research and Evaluation](#), which administers the [District-Wide Survey](#). While the specific questions included in a metric may change over time, the metrics generally include all questions from the relevant domain (e.g., Climate) that contain clear positive and negative options, such as “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree.”

More information on the surveys, including responses to individual survey items, is available on the [Philadelphia School Surveys website](#).