

August 16, 2010

Dear Agora Parent or Guardian,

Every year, all students across Pennsylvania in grades 3-8 and 11, take the Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA). This assessment provides school districts with specific information regarding student performance in math and reading. In 2005, the first operating year of Agora Cyber Charter School, less than 10 students completed the PSSA. This group of students did not meet the academic achievement targets set by the state. In 2007, 2008 and 2009 Agora did not meet the state requirements and did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In order to make AYP, a district must meet three targets: 1) attendance or graduation rate, 2) participation rate, and 3) performance on the PSSA.

The chart below illustrates Agora's 2009-2010 results based on these three targets:

Target	Overall Rate	State Target	Met AYP (Yes or No)
Attendance/Graduation	68.5%	85%	No
Participation (Math and Reading)	99%	95%	Yes
Performance Math (Overall)	47.1%	56%	No
Performance Reading (Overall)	55.5%	63%	No

As you can see, we did not meet the state minimums, but there are some academic gains to celebrate and our momentum is moving ahead. When a school does not meet all AYP targets and is placed in Corrective Action II, we are required to notify parents. I also want to provide a little more information so that you can understand the whole story behind the scores and the state ratings. It's not as simple as it appears.

Not only does our entire population need to meet the thresholds, but each subgroup of students (Subgroups are based on Ethnicity, Special Education, English Language Learners, and Economically Disadvantaged students when there is a group of 40 or more). The table below shows where we made academic gains by subgroup and where we still need improvement.

Math		Reading	
Group/subgroup	Met AYP	Group/subgroup	Met AYP
All	Yes	All	Yes
White	Yes	White	Yes
Latino/Hispanic	No	Latino/Hispanic	Yes
Black	No	Black	Yes
Multi-Racial	Yes	Multi-Racial	Yes
IEP	No	IEP	No
Economically Disadvantaged	No	Economically Disadvantaged	Yes

Our goal is to meet the proficiency standard for all students. With many new students enrolling in Agora 2 and 3 years behind grade level, it is difficult to turn around their academic history in one school year. With hard work, we can make a difference for these students and they can catch up. Until then, we can demonstrate how we are closing these learning gaps by gains made in one year. We have good data that shows that the longer students remain with Agora, the stronger the results.

We are proud of Agora students, even if only 23 out of 29 targets were met. Students are making academic progress even though it is sometimes not reflected in the AYP results. Agora administrators and teachers have

already put into place additional supports to ensure that all students receive individualized attention to any academic needs they have, and I am confident with hard work, commitment and dedication, we will see additional improvements next year. Below are the strategies put into place for this year to ensure academic growth for all students above and beyond the PSSA thresholds so all students can reach their academic potential.

- All new and returning students will receive a home visit by teachers during the first month of school. We believe that it's important to build the relationship between home and school immediately, as this strong relationship is a critical ingredient to student success. We look for this relationship to improve attendance, engagement, and school drop-out and graduation rates.
- Students in grades 3-11 will continue to participate in Scantron Performance and Achievement Series testing to measure academic gains throughout the school year. The Performance assessment establishes a benchmark and is taken during the first week of school and then again at the end of the school year to show student growth throughout the year. Additional Achievement series assessments will be taken weekly and results of these assessments will provide parents and teachers with feedback and will guide individualized instruction for each student.
- Students in grades K-6 will also continue to participate in Aimsweb screenings to provide teachers and parents with feedback on learning in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Students in grades K-2 will be screened three times per year while students in grades 3-6 will be screened in the beginning of the year and will be monitored if scores fall below the benchmark set by the national percentage. The first screenings will be conducted at the end of home visits if time permits.
- All students in grades 2-8 and 11 are provided with the PA standards aligned program Study Island. This web-based tool provides practice and instruction on math and reading standards. Consistent and daily use will help students gain the necessary skills to become proficient in the standards.
- Students identified as needing intensive academic support in order to close identified instructional gaps will participate in mandatory remediation activities. These interventions will include (but not be limited to) participation in required daily or weekly, synchronous Elluminate sessions and an increased level of teacher/student interaction which could also include Face to Face tutoring for additional instructional activities.
- Agora uses a Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) process to assist students who are not mastering skills. Through this process students are provided intervention strategies; individual learning plans, increased direct instruction with teachers and if needed, supplemental programs to address academic concerns. Students may also be required to attend face to face tutoring sessions in order to close achievement gaps.

Parent support is essential to the success of Agora. Communicating with your child's teachers, making sure your child attends school regularly, helping your child with school work, and participating in school decision-making are important.

Agora is committed to every student and embraces a collaborative partnership between teachers and parents in order to empower students to reach extraordinary heights. We know that this relationship is essential to student achievement and success.

Sincerely,

Sharon Williams
Head of School