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ABSTRACT

This paper presents research findings to help policymakers understand and select various options for holding schools accountable for their performance and to help them devise a multistrategy accountability system. However, it does not recommend one system over another, since a given accountability option must be compatible and adapted to particular State and local contexts. Education policy has advanced historically through incremental or trial-and-error stages ("disjointed incrementalism"), as exemplified in the area of accountability. The lessons policymakers can learn from more than a century of experience with accountability are reviewed; and failures and false starts, and promising practices are considered. Six broad approaches to accountability are discussed: (1) accountability through performance reporting; (2) accountability through monitoring and compliance with standards/regulations, (3) accountability through incentive systems; (4) accountability through reliance on the market; (5) accountability through changing the locus of authority or control of schools; and (6) accountability through changing professional roles. It is contended that State or local governments must use several of these approaches simultaneously. Since accountability is one of several strategies to improve/restructure education in the United States, policymakers should pay particular attention to analyses presented in this paper concerning potential conflicts between specific accountability systems and other reforms. Appendix A discusses issues of local accountability for California, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Florida; and Appendix B describes the California Model School Accountability Report Card. (RLC)

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers

Information Services
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Accountability:

Implications for State and Local Policymakers

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Policy Perspectives Series

Workplace Competencies: The Need to Improve Literacy and Employment Readiness

Excellence in Early Childhood Education: Defining Characteristics and Next-Decade Strategies

Increasing Achievement of At-Risk Students at Each Grade Level

Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers

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Foreword

At all levels of government, education policymakers are confronting immense problems that cry out urgently for solutions. These men and women—legislators, governors, mayors, school officials, and even the President of the United States—generally agree that our schools cannot be left to operate unaltered and that the need for reform is widespread and immediate.

Policymakers know, for example, that the growing demand for early education is forcing a crisis in that field and that educators of young children now grapple with demands that are straining their resources and compelling them to redefine their mission. They listen as employers loudly lament the quality of our high school graduates, while investing millions of corporate dollars in programs that teach basic skills and workplace competencies to their newest workers. And they search diligently for programs and practices that can reverse our alarming failure to bolster the achievement levels of at-risk students.

But if the problems are numerous and compelling, there is no shortage of proposed solutions. Currently, one of the most favored reform strategies calls for implementing accountability measures that would more clearly define and assess who is responsible for student success and student failure. Thus, while the number of programs, strategies, suggestions, proposals, and techniques for dealing with such specific issues as literacy or achievement levels among at-risk youngsters is mind-boggling, many of these approaches now contain one or more strategies for holding schools accountable for student learning.

Given the intensity of the school reform debate and the abundance of ideas for remedying the Nation's educational ills, it is not surprising that many policymakers often find themselves adrift in a sea of uncollated and frequently conflicting information that does little to inform decision making.

In an effort to alleviate this situation and to inform the education debate, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) decided last year to commission a series of papers to address those topics that policymakers themselves told us were most pressing.

We began by surveying the major policymaking organizations and asking them to identify which school-related issues they viewed as compelling. There was remarkable agreement in the field, and it did not take very long to identify those areas most in need of illumination. We learned, for example, that policymakers are concerned about improving literacy levels and about graduating young people who are prepared to function effectively in the modern workplace. We discovered that they are seeking strategies to combat the growing crisis in early childhood education and to raise achievement levels among at-risk students. And we found that there is a genuine need to clarify the issues surrounding educational accountability, so that intelligent decisions can be made about how best to hold schools answerable for their performance.

Thus advised, we sought the most distinguished scholars we could find to address significant aspects of these issues, and we succeeded in assembling a roster of individuals whose expertise on these subjects is unchallengeable. Indeed, I am most grateful to Michael W. Kirst, professor of education and business administration at Stanford University, for putting his considerable expertise to work in producing this paper on the implications of accountability for State and local policymakers.

I am also indebted to:

- Paul E. Barton, director of the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Policy Information Center, and Irwin S. Kirsch, research director for ETS' Division of Cognitive and Assessment Research, for their paper on *Workplace Competencies: The Need to Improve Literacy and Employment Readiness;*

- Sharon L. Kagan, associate director of The Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University, for her paper on *Excellence in Early Childhood Education: Defining Characteristics and Next-Decade Strategies;* and

- James M. McPartland, co-director of the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, Johns Hopkins University, and Robert E. Slavin, director of the Elementary School Program for the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools and co-director of the Early and Elementary School Program of the Center for Research on Effective Schooling of Disadvantaged Students, Johns Hopkins University, for their paper on *Increasing Achievement of At-Risk Students at Each Grade Level.*

We asked that all the authors approach the subjects within a common framework and bring to bear their distinctive perspectives on these important issues. Specifically, we requested that they do four things:

- Describe the issue or problem being addressed;
- Discuss briefly pertinent research on the topic;
- Describe what States and/or other concerned interest groups are doing about the issue, and
- Analyze the implications of current activity—and inactivity—for policymakers at the Federal, State, and/or local levels.

Then, to ensure that this paper—and the others in this "Policy Perspectives" series—would, in fact, be valuable to the community of policymakers, we invited all of the scholars to participate in a one-day meeting where they could present their draft findings at a public forum and then engage in small group discussions that provided a unique opportunity for face-to-face peer review sessions. Both authors and reviewers were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this process, and all of the papers were revised to reflect the feedback offered.

I want to stress, in conclusion, that it is *not* the purpose of this series to supply easy answers or quick-fix solutions to the complex problems confronting American education today. We did not start out to develop a set of blueprints with step-by-step instructions for implementing reform. Rather, we are seeking to promote the dissemination of knowledge in a format we hope will provide policymakers everywhere with new insights and fresh ideas that will inform their decision-making and translate into strategies that will revitalize the ways in which we run our schools and teach our students.

Christopher T. Cross
Assistant Secretary
Office of Educational Research
and Improvement

Acknowledgments

Information Services' "Policy Perspectives" series is one response to OERI's Congressionally-mandated mission to "improve the dissemination and application of knowledge, obtained through educational research and data gathering, particularly to education professionals and policymakers." To launch the series, we invited some of the Nation's most renowned scholars to produce pieces addressing those issues that policymakers told us were most pressing. This report is but one by-product of the undertaking.

Many people contributed to the success of this project. I would especially like to thank Michael W. Kirst of Stanford University for consenting to produce this paper, *Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers.* I am also grateful to those members of the policymaking community who agreed to review and comment on an early draft of this document. They are: Gordon Ambach, Council of Chief State School Officers; David Byer, National School Boards Association; Robert Chase, National Education Association; and Penelope Peterson, Michigan State University.

I am grateful to all of you.

Sharon Kinney Horn
Director
Information Services

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Introduction

During the 1980s, 40 States put new testing provisions into effect; local school districts across the country began revamping their teacher evaluation procedures; and the Federal government, in cooperation with the States, embarked on a process to formulate and assess national goals. These developments mean that most education policymakers will, sooner or later, be confronted with decisions about evaluating or implementing some type of accountability system.

This paper is designed to help policymakers understand and select various options for holding schools accountable for their performance. It does *not* recommend one system over another, however, because a given accountability option must be compatible with—and adapted to—particular State and local contexts. The paper begins with a review of the lessons policymakers can learn from more than a century of experience with accountability. It examines failures and false starts, as well as promising practices. The key organizing device for the paper is six broad approaches to accountability, each entailing several specific alternatives. These six approaches are

- Accountability through performance reporting,
- Accountability through monitoring and compliance with standards or regulations;
- Accountability through incentive systems;
- Accountability through reliance on the market;
- Accountability through changing the locus of authority or control of schools; and
- Accountability through changing professional roles.

These six general strategies are *not* mutually exclusive alternatives, and State or local governments usually employ several of these approaches simultaneously. The appropriate emphasis to place on each is, however, one of the most important policy decisions to be made, and this paper provides

NOTE: The writer acknowledges the assistance of Lorraine McDonnell (The RAND Corp.) and Henry Levin (Stanford University) in devising some of the typologies.

research findings that will help policymakers devise a multistrategy accountability system. Finally, because knowledge about accountability mechanisms is increasing constantly—several promising practices were undergoing development as of late 1989, for example—the paper concludes with some current developments, both positive and negative, that policymakers should watch closely.

While reading this paper, however, one caveat should be kept in mind: accountability is but one of several strategies to improve and restructure U.S. education. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to analyses within the paper of potential conflicts between specific accountability systems and other reforms. For example, a centralized accountability system that promotes uniform school-level instructional emphasis on low-level skills is in direct conflict with a restructuring strategy that emphasizes flexible teaching strategies for higher order skills, using decentralized school-site decisionmaking. Thus, in reading about various accountability alternatives, policymakers should think about the appropriate emphasis, consistency, and effectiveness within a particular State and local context.

Historical Overview

A major theme of this paper is that throughout history education policy has advanced through incremental or trial and error stages, sometimes called "disjointed incrementalism." Accountability is an excellent example of this process, as can readily be seen by examining several specific advances of the past 100 years.

While accountability has recently been "rediscovered" and has gone through yet another transformation and refinement, it actually has a long history of use, misuse, and controversy. For example, in mid-19th century England, schooling was administered under an incentive system known as "payment by results." State school inspectors gave a standard exam to each child, and then paid the schools according to students' exam scores.[1] Almost immediately, this sparked debate over whether accountability excessively narrowed the curriculum, because administrators dropped geography and history in order to spend more time on the 3 *R*'s measured by the inspectors.

Across the Atlantic, in 1879, New York State initiated the Regents exams with the view that many academic subjects needed to be part of an accountability system. With the arrival of the 20th century, scientific measurement and appropriate grade placement were featured from 1915 to 1930, and this movement overlapped with the 1920s "cult of efficiency," which applied business cost-accounting techniques to the solution of many education problems.[2] It would be another half-century, however, before educators witnessed the advent of the U.S. accountability movement's bible, Leon Lessinger's book, *Every Kid a Winner*,[3] which appeared in 1970 and stressed the same kind of cost-accounting strategies that had been popular decades earlier.

Like his predecessors, Lessinger wanted learning stated in quantifiable terms that could be related to cost statements. However, his thinking was also in tune with that of his own era, since the 1960s and early 1970s featured Program Planning Budgeting Systems (PPBS) and Management by Objectives (MBO) as favored strategies for accountability. These were followed in 1977 by President Carter's Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB). All of these budget techniques were resisted by school boards and local educators and have disappeared with barely any residue.[4]

In sum, both the early 20th century and the recent accountability movements highlighted: (1) business as the model for educators to emulate; (2) objective measures as the *primary* criterion for educational evaluation; and (3) sophisticated accounting procedures and cost control as crucial for improving education.

Not surprisingly, an abundance of literature exists on accountability. Indeed, the period from 1969 to 1976 produced a veritable blizzard of information on the topic, including an estimated 4,000 articles and books. At the same time, 35 States passed legislation based on the rubric of accountability,[5] and two major Federal projects chronicled the activity: the Cooperative Accountability Project, a Federally funded consortium of seven State education departments, and the State Education Accountability Repository (SEAR), managed by the Wisconsin State Education Department. Furthermore, model legislation spread through States, while many local education agencies (LEAs) adopted accountability techniques without State legislation. But while most of the State legislation is still on the books, implementation of the 1970s versions such as PPBS and teacher evaluation based on behavioral objectives has been curtailed or watered down.[6]

Beginning in 1983, however, school reforms brought with them still another wave of accountability legislation, focusing this time on such concepts as school report cards, merit schools, outcome-based accreditations, and interstate achievement comparisons. While the names have changed, these concepts are offshoots of the historical evolution. Therefore, while history demonstrates that effective and long-lasting accountability programs are possible, it also shows that maintaining them requires both a sophisticated understanding of past experience and a committed political constituency. In addition, even well-designed accountability techniques must be implemented through a loosely coupled administrative system that includes a complex web of State and local school control. That makes it difficult to predict the impact of a specific accountability policy upon classroom practice and provides numerous political constituencies as potential roadblocks. The remainder of this paper will expand on the reasons why some accountability techniques have become a long-run part of school operations, while others—like merit pay—have disappeared into a Bermuda triangle, probably to reappear in a subsequent era.

The Origins of Accountability Concepts

Accountability has roots in many areas of management, including economic theories about incentives and business concepts about control. Before educators borrowed the term and imbued it with their own additional meanings, accountability expressed a relationship between those who controlled institutions and those who possessed the formal power to displace them.

> The heart of the process is for the party "standing to account," the steward, to explain as rationally as possible the results of efforts to achieve the specified tasks or objectives of his stewardship.[7]

When Lessinger, then an associate commissioner with the U.S. Office of Education, began to publicize accountability in education during the late 1960s, he did so by drawing analogies to business:

> Instead of certifying that a student has spent so much time in school or taken so many courses, the schools should be certifying that he is able to perform specific tasks. Just as a warranty certifies the quality performance of a car, a diploma should certify a youngster's performance as a reader, a writer, a driver, and so on.[8]

He also urged State and local educators to adopt a new objective:

> . . . "zero reject" through basic competence for all. In order to measure how these actual results compare to the detailed objectives of the plan, it makes sense to call for an outside educational audit, much like the outside fiscal audit required of every school system today. The education "redevelopment plan" that is audited should be based on "market research," that is, an investigation of the needs of students in each particular school. The plan would stress "performance specifications" that the school considers essential.[9]

There was, of course, nothing particularly new in this rhetoric. Indeed, the same concepts were actively considered in education at the turn of the 20th century.[10] But Lessinger's ideas caught on in media and educational leadership circles, and President Nixon—at the urging of Department of Health, Education and Welfare officials—endorsed accountability in his 1970 message on education. Some, such as Henry Levin, were skeptical, however.

> Find a significant shortcoming of the educational system, and it is certain that someone will marshal a word to fight the problem. . . . Just as was the case with individualization of instruction and

compensatory education, the concept of accountability is vague and rhetorical, and if history again prevails, the word should be supplanted by new terminology within a few years, while our schools remain stubbornly steadfast in their reluctance to change.[11]

Levin's 1972 assessment of accountability as a "vague and rhetorical" concept received support in 1975 when a review of the 4,000 pieces of accountability literature reached the following conclusions:[12]

1. There are no commonly agreed-upon definitions. The range is from simply holding someone responsible for doing something to highly detailed technical specifications.

2. As a concept, accountability needs refinement. Confusion abounds among such terms as "general accountability," "institutional accountability," "technological accountability," and so on. There is no common framework to organize the vast array of techniques.

3. Accountability has become highly politicized. Various groups who can be held accountable attack the concept and pounce on malfunctions in order to discredit it.

Despite these problems, however, the notion of accountability survives, and in 1989 it emerged as a major theme at the Education Summit convened by President Bush who recommended measures such as annual report cards and national goals at the Federal, State, and local levels.

Six Approaches to Accountability

Given the tremendous and continuing interest in accountability, it is important to know that over the years there have been several attempts to build typologies of accountability techniques.[13] In this vein, Levin has provided some useful rubrics that this writer has extended and adapted.[14] Although each will be explored in depth, it is essential to bear in mind that these are broad strategy options that must be tailored to specific State and local contexts. These options must also be combined and interrelated in a sensible way. While policymakers can choose to emphasize one or another of these strategies, they should be careful to recognize concerns about appropriate balance among them.

Accountability as Performance Reporting

Performance reporting includes such measurement techniques as statewide assessment, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), school report cards, and performance indicators, and it has some similarities to the audit report in business. In essence, performance reports assume that information per se will stimulate actions to improve education. An aroused parent group, for example, will follow up on the results of a negative school report card by lobbying the school board for a new principal. Also, State performance reporting can be used to monitor regulatory compliance for such State requirements as minimum graduation requirements. The State performance reporting system, however, would have to include grade enrollments in specific academic courses.

Performance reporting in the 1980s was often linked to policies that triggered State takeovers or intervention in schools, such as occurred in New Jersey and California. However, this technique can be used to provide rewards as well as sanctions, and one recent version used in South Carolina shows that positive school-site academic performance indicators can actually stimulate State deregulation and waivers for qualifying schools.

Since all the other categories described below rely to some extent on the process and outcome of performance reports, it is not surprising that during the past decade, performance reporting was the area receiving the most widespread developmental effort related to accountability. Still, it is

questionable whether performance reports alone lead to much change in either citizen or professional educator behavior. For example, Florida has mandated school report cards since 1973, but with little impact on local policy.[15] Moreover, serious flaws remain in most existing education information programs. For example, most State information systems do not include data on course enrollment patterns and overemphasize basic-skills testing at the expense of higher order concepts.

Accountability through Monitoring and Compliance with Standards or Regulations

Approaching accountability through monitoring and compliance with standards and regulations includes not only such legal issues as the due process rights of handicapped students, but also encompasses auditing approaches, such as budget reviews. Obviously, these techniques also rely on performance reporting, but the key accountability criterion concerns *procedural* compliance. Prominent examples include individualized education plans (IEPs) for handicapped children and targeting funds under Chapter 1* programs.

As accountability techniques, mandates and monitoring can be supplemented by other strategies like capacity building and technical assistance that rely less on compliance reviews.[16] For example, some education organizations can be in compliance with regulations but need help to enhance instructional capacity before they can improve educational attainment.

Accountability through Incentive Systems

The key concept of incentive systems is reward for results, and incentives are designed to provide inducements for specific actions by educators. By using systematic processes that relate and stimulate changes among education input, processes, and outputs, these approaches link performance information with specific policy outcomes that educators presumably can manipulate.

Early incentive systems include the English payment-by-results plan, PPBS, and performance contracting. More recent approaches include merit schools, performance-based accreditation, and teacher merit pay. These

*Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the Federal government's primary compensatory education assistance program.

incentive systems have, however, been plagued with technical problems and have been resisted by education professionals, a problem discussed in the next section.

Accountability through Reliance on the Market

This approach runs the gamut from such comparatively extreme versions as vouchers or tuition tax credits for public and private schools to the more limited strategy of open enrollment within a public school district. Accountability occurs when consumers choose between schools, with the "bad schools" presumably closing if enough pupils leave. Free market systems, however, have never been tested in the United States because of various obstacles to vouchers, including political resistance and concerns about equity. Consequently, American school districts have only implemented limited market forces, and rarely have market changes resulted in lost jobs for educators. The Minnesota open enrollment plan is a highly publicized version of a limited market approach. Other examples include magnet schools and tuition tax credits.

Accountability through Changing the Locus of Authority or Control of Schools

Changing the locus of authority posits that the key to making schools more accountable lies in changing those who control education policy. That may be accomplished by such devices as the creation of parent advisory councils, implementation of school-site decentralization or community-controlled schools, and initiation of State takeovers of local school districts. Whatever the vehicle, however, the assumption is that schools are accountable to some groups but not to others, and that educational improvement lies in changing the political process so that different groups are favored. The radical decentralization of the Chicago schools, for example, relies heavily on a redistribution of influence from the central office to school-site governing bodies with a parent majority. The 1989 Education Summit implied, meanwhile, that the Governors wished to be held accountable for overall State education results rather than merely holding educators responsible for outcomes.

Accountability through Changing Professional Roles

Recently, more attention has been paid to using such professional accountability mechanisms as teachers reviewing each other for tenure and dismissal—the essence of accountability at universities. In Toledo, Ohio, for instance, experienced teachers are asked to review and help colleagues who are judged to be very ineffective by their peers. Another example is the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards which will begin certifying outstanding teachers in 1993. Two-thirds of the Board is composed of teachers. Other types of professional accountability include school accreditation and teacher-controlled boards for initial licensing of graduates from university teacher education programs. In addition, various plans to devolve policy decisions to the school site call for teacher majorities on school-site councils; this provides teachers with a new role beyond collective bargaining in site-based policymaking.

Interrelating Strategies

Several general points can be made about this typology. First, all accountability mechanisms have their strengths and weaknesses, and each is more or less appropriate for certain types of educational interventions and contexts. For example, legal monitoring and compliance mechanisms are more effective when rights and procedures are clearly definable and when bottom-line outcomes are not crucial. Second, as stated above, the six categories are not mutually exclusive and should be combined in creative and effective ways. Unfortunately, however, it is often difficult for policymakers to think systematically about the interrelationships and balance among the six. Instead, they mostly opt to emphasize one or the other as the key to enhanced school or pupil performance. Few recognize, for example, that enhanced political control at the school site requires a sophisticated school-based reporting system that focuses on broadly defined educational attainment goals.

Overall, elements of all six strategies will be present in a good accountability system, but it is unlikely that every element can or should be implemented at once. Several States have numerous accountability policies, but often they are not complete or interrelated, as evidenced in appendix A. Some States have major gaps in their accountability systems, such as new curricular goals for teachers but no attention to initial teacher preparation. Others have curricular frameworks stressing higher order con-

cepts like synthesis, analysis, inference, and expository writing, but continue to use a State assessment system that focuses solely on basic and minimum skills.

Inherent Limitations of Current Accountability Systems

Over the past 20 years, major improvements have been made in accountability systems and procedures. Before turning to these, however, it is useful to review some of the major roadblocks that current accountability techniques must still overcome and that make it difficult to transplant business accountability schemes to education.

Ideally, accountability would be a closed loop reflecting a chain of responses to perceived needs, demands, or objectives. What follows is an outline both of the ingredients needed for an ideal system and of the impediments to its realization.

1. Accountability suggests that there are explicit education objectives for the school or educational system or at least some operational consensus on the results schools will be held accountable for. But as experience with California PPBS and Michigan State Assessment reveals, it is difficult to agree on State goals or even a process to reach them.[17] High schools, for example, stress different objectives, with some featuring traditional academics and others emphasizing vocational education or alternatives that permit a lot of student course choice and independent study. Problems of this sort are compounded by ideological objections to even trying to establish precise pupil objectives.

   > The behavioral objectives approach is a closed system of thinking. It demands that ends be defined in advance. This tends to place a straitjacket on teachers and students alike and make the learning situation a search for "right" answers.
   >
   > . . . The resulting distortion is further compounded by the fact that behavioral objectives are likely to be determined by the nature of the measuring devices available.[18]

   Furthermore, many of education's objectives, such as citizenship, are ambiguous and their relationship to curricular development unclear. And finally, multiple forms of intelligence, including creative, artistic, and interpersonal attributes, are not easily reduced to measurable objectives.[19] And while new tests devised by

Connecticut and California do a better job of assessing higher order skills than most nationally standardized tests, they do not encompass all forms of intelligence. Clearly, a broader range of tests must be developed before accountability systems can become first rate.

2. Because of a lack of stated objectives and because many teacher and administrator incentive systems reward longevity rather than educational outcomes, there is a limit to the number and type of accountability incentives that can be imposed on the educational sector.[20] Indeed, a study by the National Academy of Education concluded:

> The production of educational services takes place in an organizational climate which contradicts in almost every respect the notion of educational units attempting to maximize stated objectives for a given budget.[21]

For example, State education codes and negotiated agreements with educational professionals seriously curtail managerial discretion. As Jesse Burkhead observed:

> But in elementary and secondary education there is no reason to assume that a school principal, or district superintendent, or board of education has knowledge of or interest in marginal productivity of resource inputs. Even if these were known, it could not be assumed that it would be possible to secure least cost-combinations, given the institutional rigidities of mandates and conventional practice. Neither is there a reasonable substitute for the objective function of profits maximization. Thus the optimization rationale that underlies production functions in the private sector is inapplicable for elementary and secondary education.[22]

Merit school programs in Florida and South Carolina have tried to overcome these barriers by providing financial rewards for growth in a number of State and local indicators, including attendance and physical fitness. As discussed in appendix A, both States have modified their merit school programs to a point where results appear promising.

3. A particularly difficult problem exists in ascertaining the unique contribution, or "value added," of a school or classroom to particular students' proficiencies and behaviors. Achievement studies rarely calculate the impact of socioeconomic status and environ-

mental factors upon pupil attainment, and, consequently, we cannot hold teachers accountable for factors they are unable to influence. Moreover, the link between schools and "social benefits" such as citizenship, productivity, and economic growth is far removed in time and space from where schooling actually takes place. And a dynamic social, political, and economic structure is likely to alter relationships so that new jobs do not always match current vocational training programs. Consequently, it is difficult to relate short-run educational outcomes to longer run social outcomes.[23]

Finally, teacher organizations' resistance to many forms of accountability has been strong since the movement's inception. We are, moreover, still in a trial and error stage, and some accountability "comprehensive systems" and slogans raised expectations to unrealistic levels, while some concepts were simply naive or could not be implemented.

Given the constraints outlined above, it is apparent that many of the claims made for accountability mechanisms such as merit pay and PPBS were oversimplified, oversold, and mandated before they were field tested.

Of course, it is easy to recite prior failures, and then downplay the whole movement, but that is premature, especially in view of the insistent public demand for the general concepts. Indeed, reports by the National Governors' Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, and the Education Summit all contend that accountability is crucial for the 1990s.

Promising Developments in Accountability

Since the late 1960s, much of the initial naivete about accountability has been overcome and more effective techniques discovered. For example, a number of promising combinations of approaches—such as school-site performance reporting and parent choice—have evolved. Still, in reviewing that progress under the six major accountability categories, it is important to remember that areas of controversy remain.

Recently, much of the struggle in accountability has focused on a single conflict: that between political accountability which requires, on the one hand, that schools be answerable to citizens and their elected representatives for educational results, and the professionalism of educators that implies, on the other hand, that they possess sufficient discretion to make judgments about adapting instructional strategies to particular student characteristics.[24] These competing values can be balanced, but some accountability systems emphasize one to the virtual exclusion of the other. At one extreme, for example, tests can force teachers to cover certain content items or skills at a particular time or even to move pupils from one grade to another against teachers' better judgment. At the other extreme, some teacher contracts insulate teachers from dismissal or even a stringent tenure review despite the desire of school boards to have specific policies in the content or skills areas. Throughout this review of promising practices, this tension must be kept in mind.

Improved Performance Reporting

In the 1980s, accountability has been undergirded with better information systems than in prior eras. Ideally, these information systems perform six key functions:[25]

1. **Measuring the central features of schooling.**—In the 1960s, accountability systems included inputs (resources) and outputs (test scores), but still they were unable to help policymakers understand why trends were getting better or worse, or how to improve performance. More recent State and local information systems, however, contain information on teachers, access to curriculum, and other processes that provide a more robust set of indicators.

2. **Measuring what should be taught.**—Often there has not been much overlap between content that States desire and content covered by teachers. Many State tests focus only on basic or minimum skills, while State curricular frameworks encourage a much wider range of content and topics. That has been a particular problem with older State assessments, although the match is now better in several States. Alignment of curricular frameworks, tests, and texts is providing more overlap with classroom instruction, but this alignment has the potential to excessively centralize policy and to undermine teacher professionalism by requiring teachers to cover specific items at a specific pace.

3. **Providing information that is policy relevant.**—Accountability systems should highlight variables, such as teacher preparation or textbooks, that can be changed by education policymakers. Some early accountability techniques stressed unalterable variables like the pupil's socioeconomic status (SES), while failing to focus on items that policymakers could change—such as the number of years of science courses required.

4. **Focusing on the school.**—Improvements must be made at the school level where pupils and teachers are directly involved. Consequently, data concentrating solely on entire districts do not provide a specific focus for school-site improvement.

5. **Encouraging fair comparisons.**—Not all schools or students start out at the same level in such areas as resources, pupil attainment, or teacher experience. Various techniques, such as comparing schools solely within comparison bands of similar schools or predicting schoolwide pupil test scores based on family SES, have been explored as ways to adjust for these initial differences *without* rationalizing lower expectations for some schools and students. However, none of these techniques has met both objectives simultaneously.

6. **Minimizing burden and maximizing use.**—Most States have at least two different testing programs—one for State assessment and another selected by the LEA for its particular needs. Not surprisingly, that increases costs and lessens student learning time. It also leads us to ask what the relative balance between State and local systems should be. Unfortunately, the question is rarely thought through in terms of a comprehensive accountability system. California, a notable exception, is now experimenting with an integrated system that allows LEAs to choose from a generic set of

items that are "anchored" to the statewide test. (Appendix B contains a California school report card that meets criteria 1–5 in large part, but has a very high local response burden.)

Policymakers should be careful not to use the same accountability measures for schoolwide indicators as they use to gauge the individual performance of pupils and teachers. There is a fundamental conceptual difference between performance accountability as it applies to school systems and performance accountability as it applies to individuals who work for these systems. Thus, items collected in surveys that are designed to obtain schoolwide scores should not be used for holding individual teachers accountable. Classroom observations are a more reliable device for individual teacher evaluation.

Gaps in Many State Education Data Systems

While States and localities have made improvements in their performance indicators, these systems are no better than their data base. The following are some of the crucial gaps that unfortunately remain in many States and localities.

- In almost all States, little data exist on middle schools. Not much is known, for example, about how tracks and courses in the middle grades determine academic choices in senior high schools.
- Typically, no integration exists between colleges and elementary-secondary schools. Most States, for example, have no way of knowing how students from specific high schools perform in colleges or what their freshman grade point averages are. And rarely is there any analysis or publicity about how graduates of specific high schools score on college academic placement tests. Since many colleges are designing new data systems, integration with secondary school needs is a particularly appropriate area for attention.
- In most States, high school performance data focus primarily on those students bound for 4-year colleges or on those in the bottom quartile. Many States gather specific data on academic course-taking patterns, but not on "life in the general or middle tracks" where fewer academic courses are taken. And while categorical program data provide insight on the lowest achievers, these findings are oriented to program compliance rather than to curriculum improvement.

- There are serious shortcomings in existing data on the new policy dimensions regarding teacher quality. States need annual surveys of teachers working in subjects for which they have no credentials, as well as supply-and-demand projections by subfield, and assessments of the probability that teachers in the reserve pool will return to the schools. Most States have not been gathering these data because of the teacher surplus that occurred from 1970 to 1982.

- All States need to make a major effort to improve data on dropouts. Currently, many States calculate attrition data but not data on dropouts. (The U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the States, has provided nationwide, standard definitions.)

States seeking to bridge these data gaps and, at the same time, comply with reform laws requiring collection of some new types of data should closely scrutinize existing data streams. For example, new data demands on localities to evaluate State reform can frequently be eased by coupling them with reductions in other data requests. Thus, States should look carefully to see if certain kinds of little-used financial data might be eliminated or whether reductions in Federal regulations governing Chapter 1 may have decreased the need for certain compliance-related data.

At the same time, however, States must be aware that assessment programs now used to test reading and math cannot be turned into freight trains used to carry vitally needed data to assess the impact of new State reforms. Any appreciable increase in data requirements attached to State testing programs probably will lead to increased resistance by LEAs and lower data reliability. In California, for example, the statewide California Assessment Program became loaded down with many new items related to categorical program evaluation and school climate and course-taking patterns, because it was the only data vehicle reaching students. California has now restricted the use of the State testing program for ancillary data. States need to consider development of a student information data sheet that would become part of their basic data system along with finance and teacher characteristics.

Despite the need for improvements in data base quality, State indicator systems are becoming increasingly sophisticated and are being based on improved information systems. Still, a recent national study argued that we still have a way to go.[26]

It concluded:

- There is an understandable but often premature drive to report results so as to hold local school officials accountable. Consequently,

the use of indicators for local policymaking is not optimal. Localities feel the State indicators are not very relevant to their local context.

- There is a reluctance at the State level to assume responsibility for the quality of the indicator system.
- There is a tentativeness with regard to the exploration of critical relationships among school processes, system outcomes such as student performance, and background or contextual variables.
- There is slow and uneven formation of the necessary building blocks to support an indicator system. States are building an analytical infrastructure to support indicator systems but are hardly finished.

Accountability through Incentive Systems

As discussed earlier, the use of incentive systems has historically been the most difficult method of approaching accountability, including the failure of performance contracting and merit pay to achieve widespread acceptance. School budgets remain input oriented in categories such as administration and instruction, and cost-effectiveness analysis is rare, even though low-cost programs like peer tutoring and computer-assisted instruction are effective in some circumstances.[27]

In the early 1970s, performance contracts used outside business firms to provide intensive remedial programs for disadvantaged children, and contractors were paid according to test score increases. However, the experiment collapsed when a contractor in Texarkana, Texas, falsified test data in order to make more money.[28] Merit pay, meanwhile, has been plagued by measurement problems that have galvanized strong union resistance.[29] One obstacle is that while it is possible to identify incompetent teachers, sorting out the top 10 or 20 percent of teachers from their colleagues who perform at above average or adequate levels appears futile.

These difficulties have resulted in a new focus on the school site as the unit for performance pay through such schemes as merit schools, an approach that avoids competition among teachers and that can build school morale. Again, however, problems arise in devising outcome measures that are precise and legitimate enough to stimulate widespread acceptance. States like Florida and South Carolina base their payments in part on increases in State assessment scores. These assessments, in turn, are criticized because they do not stress higher order skills and may omit subject areas

like social science and foreign languages. Consequently, they run afoul of the old objections of being too narrow and causing year-to-year random variations in school-site achievement patterns.

However, Florida has been able to overcome these complaints somewhat by permitting LEAs to use some locally established performance objectives as well as State basic skills tests. For example, some Florida localities establish increases in areas such as attendance, physical fitness, and history achievement as their objectives. If the LEA meets these objectives *and* State test scores increase, the merit school payment is allocated. Florida appropriates $10 million for this program and permits school districts to spend the money on anything they choose, including teacher salaries. Not surprisingly, this provision has brought in teacher union support, particularly in American Federation of Teachers (AFT) locals.

Craig Richards has completed a study of State merit school programs for the Center for Policy Research in Education; he found that 13 States implemented or are formulating school incentive plans.[30] He reports that States use both "fixed performance plans," where schools compete against a standard for awards, and "competitive performance plans," where they vie with each other. In South Carolina, for example, schools in the top 25 percent compete in one of five groupings, according to LEA socioeconomic status.

Richards stresses that States have not reached a consensus about the best indicators of school performance. States have used test scores, attendance, and local goals—including even physical fitness—but the overall concept of school incentive plans has yet to reach maturity. Unresolved issues include:

- Accommodating the high correlation between test scores and pupils' socioeconomic backgrounds;
- Assessing implications for finance equalization if wealthy districts are frequent winners;
- Establishing an optimal balance between monetary vs. nonmonetary rewards as incentives for educators;
- Determining whether State deregulation is a significant enough incentive to change local educators' behavior;
- Developing the process needed to effect a high degree of perceived fairness and broad political support for any incentive plan and method of calculating school performance.

Despite the lack of consensus on these still unresolved issues, school site goals/objectives can be a useful accountability device even if no specific payment is attached. In his accelerated schools program, Henry Levin uses school system goals on curriculum as a starting point, and then asks each school to set the specific goals it wants to accomplish over a three-year period. These goals are "bottom line" and include test and other outcomes such as increased parent involvement. At the end of the three years he describes the process this way:

> There should be at least a preliminary attempt to determine why some goals were exceeded and others were not met. . . . Some questions include: 1) Were some goals too ambitious or easy to reach? 2) What did the school learn about its capabilities and improvements? 3) What changes need to be made in both school and district capacities?[31]

In sum, school site accountability goals need to include a mixture of quantitative and qualitative outcomes and process indicators. Site goals should be precise enough that they can be used for summary evaluations after 3 years or more. The goal-setting process needs to result in frequent reviews of school performance.

Accountability through Changing the Locus of Control

American schools have always operated under the motto that "education is too important to be left to educators." Traditionally, the prime accountability mechanism has been the local school board, often elected from a very small geographic region. Indeed, the United States still has more than 15,000 school districts that hold elections for some members at least every other year. Recently, however, the public has begun to lose confidence in school boards, and satisfaction with this crucial accountability device has declined. But despite this phenomenon, Americans still support local school boards—rather than State or Federal government—as the preferred locus of control. Indeed, a 1986 Gallup Poll reported that, when asked their views about who should control schools, 57 percent of the public said that local school boards should have more influence. By comparison, 45 percent favored increased State influence and 26 percent supported a larger Federal role. Therefore, one strategy for improved accountability is to strengthen school board policymaking capacity and performance, as recommended by the Institute for Educational Leadership.[32]

There are, however, no accepted theories or data to determine whether the school board or some other institution should be the decisionmaker. Clune puts it this way:

> Since no decision maker is perfect, the distrust directed at one decision maker must be carefully weighed against the advantages of that decision maker and both the advantages and disadvantages of alternative decision makers. In other words, although the logic of institutional choice typically begins with distrust, distrust itself proves nothing in the absence of a superior alternative. . . . The logic of comparative institutional advantage also implies the futility of seeking perfect or ideal implementation of a policy. . . . The real world offers a "least worst choice" of imperfect institutions.[53]

Recently, the restructuring movement has promoted more discretion at the school-site level. But who should control flexible school-site resources? Four viewpoints have been advanced:

- First, under the concept of principal as site manager, the principal should control resources and be held accountable for the success of the school. Success can be measured through school-site performance reports that include pupil attainment measures, as well as the impact of budget allocations made by the principal upon specific measurable school-site goals. This view of the principal as site manager was reinforced by the school effectiveness literature's focus on strong school leadership.

- Second, parents should control site policy because they are the consumers and care most deeply about policies at schools their children attend. Parents are less interested in central district policies that have no easily discernible impact on their children, so specific school-site accountability systems should be designed with parents as the primary audience. The American philosophy of lay control implies that parent school-site councils should deliberate and decide on school-level policy. Consequently, decisions on budget, personnel, and curriculum should be made by parent-majority site councils.

- Third, teachers should form a school-site senate to allocate funds and personnel as well as decide instructional issues. Teachers cannot be held accountable for pupil performance if they do not control resource allocations but must instead follow standardized instructional procedures. School-site policymaking by teachers would also enhance their professional image and self-concept.

- Fourth, none of these rationales is sufficiently compelling that it should be the norm. Instead, all factions deserve a place at the table, and the best arguments should prevail. Consequently, a school-site council should have "parity" of membership among teachers, administrators, and parents who would then reach agreements through bargaining and coalitions. At the high school level, students might also be included. (The recently implemented Chicago decentralization embodies the second viewpoint, while in Rochester, New York, the teachers' contract provides for their participation in school-site councils with membership "parity.")

There are, of course, other concepts for changes in governance that do not rely on school sites. State takeover of local schools, for example, reverses the State's historic practice of delegating accountability to the local school board. Accountability accomplished through a State-appointed trustee is another indication that public confidence in some school boards is eroding. At the systemwide level, meanwhile, local businesses are also gaining strong influence over site accountability. For example, the Boston Compact guarantees students local jobs if high schools produce graduates possessing a particular level of competence.

Accountability through the Market

The rising interest in choice has focused on the market and the parent as crucial accountability devices. However, attempts to legislate vouchers or tuition tax credits for use in private schools have failed politically and continue to face difficult legal obstacles. Meanwhile, choice restricted totally to the public sector may not be a powerful accountability device. For example, experience in Minnesota—which implemented an ambitious statewide choice plan—is still too limited to evaluate, but appears to involve less than 3 percent of the total students. For policymakers contemplating choice programs in their States or districts, analysts highlight several crucial points for ensuring effective programs:[34]

- **Choice is not a panacea.** It must be linked with other school improvement strategies to achieve the long-run goal of restructuring schools. Choice plans should include a clear statement of goals that schools are expected to meet.
- **Choice is not low-cost school improvement.** When choice is done carefully and when it is linked to other school improvement strategies (e.g., restructuring), it will involve new investments in edu-

cation. Transportation should be provided for all students within a reasonable geographic area.

- **Choice must offer diversity and quality.** If families are offered a choice among uniform and mediocre schools, choice will have done nothing but stir the fires of discontent. Programs should include help for many schools to develop distinctive features, rather than simply concentrating resources on a few schools.
- **Choice must be well planned.** When choice policies are carefully designed and attention is paid not only to family freedom, but also to school improvement and educational equity, the positive outcomes may outweigh any negative ones. Oversight and modification of the program should be included at the planning stage.
- **Choice must be carefully implemented.** When a change of this magnitude is contemplated, a phased-in process of implementation will do much to avoid potential pitfalls and to assuage political opposition. Implementation should include information and counseling for parents in selecting among the various programs available to their children, and admissions procedures that are fair and equitable—not based on "first come, first served" or on the past achievement or behavior of students.
- **Choice is also for students who do not move.** The success of choice is not measured by the number of children who change schools, but by the improvements that schools make in order to be attractive so that they may retain the students they currently serve.[35]
- **Choice should include procedures for ensuring racial balance and promoting racial integration.** State dollars for special programs should follow the students.

Overall, choice remains complex and costly to design and implement, but does provide a distinctive market-oriented approach to accountability.

Accountability through Changing Professional Roles

The history of accountability features attempts by higher level authorities to control the behavior of classroom teachers. Professionalism, however, stresses the desirability of accountability coming from *within* the teaching force rather than being imposed by external authorities. The key

is for teachers to help each other improve and to take responsibility for assessing quality. This concept is spreading slowly and is most prominent in urban districts and among State licensing boards. In order for this approach to work, however, policymakers must trust teachers to provide sufficient accountability, and they must permit sufficient flexibility in classroom practice for professional discretion to be exercised. That involves a change in attitudes for both administration and teachers.

In Dade County, Florida, professional accountability has been combined with changes in the locus of control through the introduction of school-site management.[36] Teachers represent a majority of the school-site council which allocates resources and designs curriculum. Moreover, responsibility for hiring and firing of teachers has shifted substantially toward the council. Teachers in Dade County decentralized schools describe the principal as more of a coach than a foreman, and teacher evaluation is primarily conducted by the department chairs and by other teachers. This decentralized decisionmaking is strongly supported by the AFT union local and is evaluated in part by the elaborate school-site indicators and report card system that has existed in the county for many years. However, the system is still evolving, and a key issue is the role of the teacher-dominated school council in evaluating the school's performance.

Trends and Implications

Over the past 25 years, accountability concepts have constantly been created, discarded, adapted, and improved. The early disillusionment with PPBS and performance contracting has been replaced by an incremental refinement of techniques. At the same time, public demand for accountability has intensified, and that demand is reflected in the national goals and objectives set forth at the Education Summit. Still, the word accountability continues to span a very wide variety of concepts and policies, making it an elusive concept to grasp. The movement, however, has left a large repository of published studies that encompass theory and practical advice.

This paper has used a specific typology that policymakers may find useful in organizing the multifaceted accountability literature. Some important trends that are highlighted in this literature and have important implications for policymakers are:

1. Data systems and performance indicators have improved to the point where we now have a vast array of potential input, process, and outcome variables that are useful for accountability. The big problem is developing and funding the data base to include adequately the full range of educational endeavor. We now know what data are useful to collect, but the expense of funding data bases is yet to be faced.[37] Federal goals, for example, will require a revamped and expanded National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and necessitate close coordination with such national curriculum movements as Science 2061 and the national mathematics frameworks recommended by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Both of these curriculum redesigns envision interdisciplinary work and problem-solving concepts that are not included in current tests like NAEP.

   Furthermore, many State education agencies (SEAs) and LEAs have only begun to phase in indicators and report cards. Often these indicators are too narrow to capture the complexity of education, although an awareness is developing of the desirability of more complex and comprehensive indicators. Indeed, some policymakers are now scrutinizing whether existing State and local tests overemphasize minimum competency and low-level general skills at

the expense of analysis, synthesis, inference, and expository writing. Subject-matter tests in such areas as history and science are being added, as well as assessments that include synthesis, analysis, statistical inference and other higher order skills.

Performance indicators can either help increase academic standards through better assessments or be a straitjacket embodying only low-level skills. Policymakers should be aware that new assessment concepts, being developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and by States like Connecticut and California, will provide more effective performance-driven accountability systems.

2. Policymakers are rethinking their heavy reliance on legal and bureaucratic accountability. The National Governors' Association, for example, is pushing for a "horse trade" offering less regulation *if* performance indicators demonstrate positive outcomes. And some States, in an effort to spur innovation, are conducting experiments with wholesale waivers of their codes.

   Thus, while regulations remain an important part of categorical programs and are essential for auditing, more attention is now being paid to implementation research that stresses the need to allow several models of practice to develop within categorical programs and the value of letting local practitioners experiment with these models to see which one works best in a local context.[38] Put another way, a new balance within regulatory accountability is being sought that includes the redistribution of discretion from central offices to school sites and the loosening of categorical restrictions. We probably have seen the high point of State-mandated procedural accountability techniques such as standardized check lists for principals to use in assessing teachers. The trade-off among accountability techniques is highlighted by the use of more precise performance output indicators as a rationale for less procedural or bureaucratic accountability. A crucial unknown, however, is how far education can move from rule-driven to performance-driven accountability emphases.

3. Incentive system approaches that use incentive pay as an accountability strategy to promote better input-output relationships remain problematic. Merit pay seems to have lost whatever slight political momentum it had in the early 1980s, and merit schools are spreading very slowly throughout the States—although new Federal funds may provide added stimulus.

Incentive systems that are part of the normal school budget process are also not gaining ground. PPBS and MBO budget procedures that expand specific programs demonstrating high cost-effectiveness ratios are rarely used by LEAs. We need more experimentation in these areas. For example, current input budgeting relies on enrollment-driven formulas and is not very useful for assessing program effectiveness. School budgets still rely on general categories like "instruction" and "administration" that cannot be related to goals or even input categories like English or math services offered.

4. Political accountability is a major topic with dramatic new policies being implemented in Chicago, Illinois, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and other districts. Decentralization is a popular concept, and it can be combined with such strategies as restructuring, professionalism, and community control. While Chicago features community control of each school site, Santa Fe emphasizes professional control at the school site by teachers. Since the central office surrenders some of its procedural accountability under all these schemes, rethinking how the central office can better help school sites has assumed new importance. Industrial restructuring that permits more flexibility at lower levels is a model which has helped create momentum for decentralization in education. Educators are examining industrial restructuring concepts that stress more worker decisionmaking and control of assembly line production.

5. Market accountability advocates currently focus on the public sector, with declining political interest in providing public aid to private schools. While more open enrollment within and between public school districts is likely, how many pupils will use it is unclear. For example, school choice can be based on proximity to the parents' workplace or on the attraction of a particular school or education program. Will parents' knowledge that they have choice (even if they do not exercise it) be an important accountability technique? No one knows at this time. An even more fundamental open question centers on how much market accountability will improve the quality of school performance or pupil attainment. And still another unknown is whether schools that lose pupils will improve their educational performance or continue to deteriorate.

In sum, educational accountability is a very old concept that continues to grow and diversify. It has not yet reached maturity nor achieved an

integration of strategies that reinforce each other. Still, substantial progress has been made, and we have learned from the false starts of the 1960s and 1970s.

Thus, while accountability policies still reflect a trial-and-error approach whereby new schemes are proposed and some "work" better than others, refinements have been made in such areas as performance indicators and professional accountability. But while these improvements provide reason for optimism, caution is needed as policymakers rush into accountability without a clear understanding of obstacles and unintended consequences. Indeed, one major concern is that accountability approaches will inhibit restructuring of education and broader concepts of assessment that go beyond basic skills. The potential for accountability systems to conflict with one another is highlighted in a recent analysis of school restructuring cases.[39] The Dade County school-site council—dominated by teachers—is a new form of accountability, but, in order to be effective, one school had to request over 100 waivers from the older system of standards and regulations. Meanwhile, in Jefferson County, Kentucky, new forms of site and professional accountability were inhibited by State-mandated evaluation criteria and by Kentucky's statewide use of the California Test of Basic Skills to evaluate student and school performance. In addition, State accreditation requirements conflicted with Jefferson County's efforts to make curriculum revisions that changed the length of time students were in class.

The difficulties encountered in these districts effectively illustrate the policy issues identified at the beginning of this paper: accountability options are difficult to blend, and policymakers need to consider local contexts when determining the emphasis and balance among alternatives. It is essential to keep those thoughts in mind, since there is one certainty—the political pressure for increased accountability is unremitting and rising, due to public concern about the relative performance of U.S. students on international assessments and the recognition that too many students lack the skills needed to improve America's economic productivity.

Notes

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Appendix A

Local Accountability

State: California

Monitoring in California is highly coordinated and increasingly sophisticated. The monitoring system was developed in conjunction with the State's omnibus reform legislation—SB813. School reform in California, however, is much larger than SB813. Student testing predates it. Test-text linkages and standards for student performance and academic content are aided by SB813, but are not directly authorized by it.

Despite the significant capacity of the State department of education for implementing, monitoring and expediting reform, the key provisions of SB813 have been incentives rather than mandates. No agency was given direct power to enforce SB813 and no natural constituency expressed interest in monitoring the reforms. Most of the reforms were implemented at the discretionary option of local districts.

The State accountability system is organized around the Performance Report for California Schools. The report consists of 5 major sections—the first 4 indicating educational quality and the last providing contextual information on schools and students. Among the major inputs for the Performance Report are data collected by the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS), the "Quality Indicators" Program, and the California Assessment Program (CAP).

California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS)

CBEDS is a single, annual data collection effort undertaken by the department of education which provides data on schools, school staff, enrollment and course-taking. All public schools in the state participate in CBEDS. *Information is collected from teachers and principals each October during a day set aside to complete the CBEDS forms.*

NOTE: 'Local Accountability' working paper was prepared by the staff of the Center for Policy Research in Education.

California Assessment Program (CAP)

In 1972 the legislature established CAP which permitted cross-school comparisons of achievement for the first time. CAP provides achievement information on schools and districts but not for individual students. Statewide testing of all California 3rd, 6th and 12th graders has been conducted since 1973. The testing program uses questions specifically designed to match California's school curriculum.

CAP was expanded in 1983 to include grade eight. All grades are currently tested in reading, mathematics and written language. The eighth-grade test also includes history/social studies. In 1987, the State department of education revised the twelfth-grade reading and mathematics tests to align them with the model curriculum guides.

For purposes of drawing comparisons among schools, a composite index which represents factors associated with students' backgrounds is computed for each school based on data provided by students in the CAP. All schools are ranked in ascending order according to their composite score. Each school is then "banded" with the 80 schools immediately above and below it in the rankings.

Until recently monies were provided for schools that improved their CAP scores through a program called CASH-for-CAP. The awards were made to schools typically for only one year, and in a seemingly random fashion.

The 12th-grade CAP scores in reading and mathematics, reported by percentages at the first, second, and third quartile, and school averages are included in the Performance Report for California Schools.

Quality Indicators

The first phase of the State's "quality indicators" accountability program was to identify the measures against which educational progress will be judged and to establish goals for statewide improvement. A comprehensive set of accountability measures was developed which include the following State quality indicators:

- increased enrollment in mathematics, English, science, history and social studies, foreign language, and fine arts
- improved statewide CAP scores
- reduced dropout rates and increased student attendance rates

- increased performance of the college-bound student on the SAT and AP exams and College Board achievement tests.

Statewide targets for improvement through 1990 were established for each quality indicator. The accountability program also asked districts and schools to establish their own local targets and improvement strategies to help meet State goals. The State has recommended to local districts that they collect indicator information in the following areas:

- the strength of school curricula
- evidence of a positive school climate
- the amount and quality of students' writing
- the amount and quality of homework assignments
- the number and types of books read by students
- community support for schools
- awards and recognition received by students, teachers and the school
- the nature and quality of support provided to students who exhibit special educational needs
- participation by students in extracurricular activities

Data collected by the quality indicators program is incorporated in the Performance Report for California Schools. Districts have the option of providing indicators of educational quality that are derived from local data.

Other aspects of local accountability include:

Model Curriculum Standards

SB813 required the State department of education to develop model curriculum standards for the mandated graduation requirements. *School districts are required to compare their local curriculum to the model standards at least once every three years. CAP uses the standards in the development of its measures of student achievement.*

School Improvement Program

California's School Improvement program provides approximately $85 per student to schools in the program to develop and implement a school site-defined education improvement program. A School Improvement Program Quality Review is conducted every three years to evaluate each

school's program. *Prior to 1983–84 the review was conducted by State department of education monitors and emphasized services for special needs pupils. The program quality review has since been decentralized to the local level and focuses on the quality of the school curriculum and the degree to which categorical services for special student populations reinforce the core curriculum program.* A consortia of local educators now conduct program quality reviews removing the State from the local review process.

Certification of Teacher Evaluators and New Teacher Evaluation Systems

SB813 required teacher evaluators to be certified in a set of newly identified competencies. *In order for school districts to receive school apportionments from the State School Fund, on or before 12/1/84, they had to adopt regulations establishing the certification of personnel assigned to evaluate teachers.* Teacher evaluators needed to demonstrate competence in instructional methodologies and evaluation for the teachers they were assigned to evaluate.

Staff Development for Teachers

SB813 mandated that teachers hired after September 1985 receive 150 hours of staff development every 5 years. A joint study by Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development and Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) which examined staff development in California was published in December 1987. The study was funded by the California Postsecondary Education Commission. It found that staff development activities had been largely unevaluated. *The report recommended the development of five-year strategic action plans by schools which would be evaluated yearly as part of an annual report submitted to parents and pupils. The annual reports would contain descriptions of the school, its faculty, facilities, administrative and other personnel, curriculum, and mission. The annual reports would also include a school's self-evaluation, honors and awards the school received, and student achievement on statewide measures. Staff development goals should be consistent with the overall strategic action plan.*

Assignment of Teachers

SB435 went into effect at the beginning of 1988 to prevent teachers from being assigned outside their designated credential areas. The statute authorizes the California Teaching Commission to develop sanctions (ranging from fines to actions against administrative credentials) against such assignments.

The monitoring and reporting system will begin in July 1989. Teachers will be required to report misassignments to the county superintendent. In the 1988–89 school year, superintendents must provide a teacher assignment report to the local governing board and

county superintendent by December 15. The following year the county superintendent will submit these reports to the California Teaching Commission which will, in turn, convey them to the legislature.

Standard Dropout Definition

In 1985, SB65 standardized the dropout definition in California. Schools were requested to maintain records of dropouts according to this definition beginning with the 1985–86 school year. *Summaries of these records were collected through CBEDS in 1987.*

State: Georgia

Prior to Georgia's Quality Basic Education Act (QBE), State monitoring was oriented toward compliance with Federal programs. The State audited every school district for compliance with program mandates, and regional directors reviewed each district once every three years. Local accountability under QBE is monitored through the Comprehensive Evaluation System. The State department of education is required to compile an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly concerning the results of all statewide assessments of student achievement, the status of each public school, local school system, and regional education service agency (RESA).

To assist in collecting local data the State is developing an automated accountability system called the Comprehensive Educational Information Network that will eventually link every district with the State department of education. The system was recently reported to be 16-months behind schedule. It has been piloted and some districts are on-line, but the system is not expected to be fully implemented until July 1990.

QBE has significantly changed student testing. The State's existing system of criterion-referenced tests has been supplemented with a set of norm-referenced tests.

Local districts are also involved with and affected by State teacher policy. The Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) evaluation is a criterion-based assessment required of all new teachers. The TPAI is conducted by a team of three professional educators—an administrator and a peer teacher from the local district and an external data collector from the Regional Assessment Center (RAC).

Comprehensive Evaluation System (CES)

This system specifies in a massive document everything a school needs to do to be classified as "standard" (as opposed to non-standard). Schools must be standard in order to receive State funds. They have six months to remediate deficiencies. The document also lists items that must be met in order to qualify for an exemplary rating. Exemplary ratings carry per student bonuses for the district.

QBE states that the comprehensive evaluation is to be done once every five years; however, State evaluators began annual on-site visitations to each during the 1987–88 school year. *A team of 12 evaluators from the Division of*

Standards and Evaluation conducted on-site evaluations in 186 school districts and over 1700 schools. Districts are required to have documentation of compliance with the standards "bundled" for evaluators according to the specific requirements of the CES. The areas that are evaluated include:

(a) the extent to which the State's strategic plan has been effectively implemented

(b) the extent to which the State's core curriculum has been effectively implemented

(c) the extent of compliance with State laws and State board-prescribed policies, rules, regulations, standards and criteria

(d) the effectiveness of educational programs and services, including comparisons to student bodies which are comparable demographically

(e) the effectiveness of annual personnel evaluation procedures, particularly as they apply to compliance with the State board-prescribed accounting system and spending regulations

(f) the accuracy of student count procedures

(g) the accuracy of fiscal procedures

(h) the extent to which public awareness and information process comply with State law and State board regulations.

Each local school system is required to publish the results of their comprehensive evaluation in the local newspaper that is designated to carry legal notices.

Georgia Student Assessment Program

Norm-referenced testing program

Nationally normed tests are mandated for grades 2, 4, 7, and 9. Georgia uses the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) for grades 2, 4, and 7 and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) for grade 9. The areas tested are reading, math, science, and social studies. *An annual report is published by the Division of Standards and Assessment of the Georgia Department of Education. Two different scores are reported: grade equivalents and percentiles. Group summaries are reported by school district and State.*

In April 1988, for the first time, kindergarten pupils were tested using a customized version of the California Achievement Test-Level 10. The subsections included are visual recognition, sound recognition, and math

concepts and applications. CTBS is producing a weighted composite scoring system specifically for Georgia. The test will serve as a readiness indicator for promotion to first grade.

Criterion-referenced testing program

CRT's have been used in Georgia since 1976. These tests are produced in Georgia and administered to pupils in grades 1, 3, 6, 8, and 10. The third-grade test is a gate for promotion. The 10th-grade test is the High School Basic Skills Test and is required for graduation. All tests include reading and mathematics. Writing components are included (or will be included) in the tests for grades 6, 8, and 10.

Reports are disseminated by the Georgia Department of Education that include scale scores, performances by skill area, and performance by objective. Included in the reports are State summaries and district summaries. QBE requires that students and parents receive grade equivalencies and percentile ranks.

National Assessment of Educational Progress

QBE mandated participation in the NAEP. Five thousand students per grade are sampled at grades 3, 7, and 11. The program is administered every year and yields State summary results only.

State: Pennsylvania

As a result of staff reductions, the monitoring capacity of the State department of education and its ability to provide technical assistance has been limited. The department relies upon self-reporting and random site visits to monitor compliance with State mandates.

The State has a system of Long Range Planning for School Improvement (LRPSI) that operates on a five-year cycle. Local districts are *asked* to identify goals and develop written plans in five areas: educational programs and services; school district management; personnel development; community/staff development; and non-district support services. At the end of the third year, schools are required to submit a mid-cycle report indicating progress on their goals. During the fifth year a self-evaluation is conducted.

Pennsylvania uses comprehensive measures of student performance to judge its educational progress. The Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) is voluntary and is a part of the LRPSI. The Testing for Essential Learning and Literacy Skills (TELLS) is mandatory and is used to allocate funds for remediation.

Testing for Essential Learning and Literacy Skills (TELLS)

TELLS is a basic skills test established in 1983 and first administered in October 1984. It measures student performance in reading and mathematics in grades 3, 5, and 8. Participation in the testing program is mandatory for all students, except those who are physically or mentally handicapped or who use English as a second language. An annual cut-off score is established and districts receive a portion of $28 million in categorical funding for remediation, according to the number of pupils who score below the cut-off. The present State budget proposal is recommending that TELLS be phased out in favor of a school-based performance incentives program.

The State department of education publishes TELLS scores in the form of a summary of student responses by item. However, in August 1987 the State department of education released reports which ranked the performance of school districts and individual schools. These reports were withdrawn because of protests from local districts who objected to the use of TELLS data for comparative purposes.

Educational Quality Assessment (EQA)

The EQA was established in 1978 by the State board to monitor local districts' performance according to Quality Goals for Education. The EQA is administered to students in grades 4, 6, 7, 9, and 11. [EQA was previously administered in grades 3, 5, and 8, but this configuration was changed when TELLS was implemented.] It measures a total of 17 areas: reading; writing; mathematics; analytical thinking; citizenship; social studies; arts and humanities; science and technology; the environment; health; self-conception; safety practices; understanding others; social responsibility; attitudes toward science; work opportunities; and attitudes toward environment. Students participate in the EQA anonymously. *Districts receive a report of their performance on EQA which most use for local planning. The report is not conducive, nor is it meant to be, for cross-district comparison.*

Teacher policy

Local accountability is an issue in the development of continuing professional development and teacher induction planning (Act 178). Each school district, intermediate unit, and vocational-technical school is required to prepare and submit such plans to the State department of education by December 31, 1988.

State: Minnesota

Minnesota educational policy is largely set by the legislature. However, there is a powerful ethic of local control, resulting in 434 districts, two-thirds with fewer than 1,000 students, resisting consolidation strongly. The legislature sustains a tradition of providing continuity, oversight, direction and political power. The legislature undertakes reform primarily by funding programs and sites. The legislators trust local capabilities and resist instituting statewide testing programs which would result in comparisons among local districts.

Planning, Evaluating & Reporting (PER) Process

The board and each school district is required to adopt a written policy which establishes instructional goals and measurable learner objectives for the district, a process for goal achievement, evaluation, and reporting procedures. The policy must be reviewed each year to identify additional goals and objectives to be addressed in the following year. The policy is to be developed in consultation with the community. This consultation takes the form of a curriculum advisory committee. By September 1 of each year the board issues a report to the committee which includes the plan and a report of the evaluation results. Every two years the testing program shall be evaluated. Professional evaluations and consumer opinions are to be included in the assessments.

Local Assessment Program

Districts are required to annually administer a State developed assessment test covering at least two subject areas to a sample of students in three grade levels. One of the subject areas must be communications, science, mathematics, or social studies and one may be chosen by the district. Districts are required to report a summary of the results to the community in an annual PER report. The report must include the following:

(a) annual instructional goals which were addressed in the planning, evaluation, and reporting process;

(b) appropriate district evaluation of the annual instructional goals;

(c) the results of the professional staff evaluation of the annual instructional goals;

(d) the results of a consumer evaluation of the annual instructional goals;

(e) the district's annual improvement plans; and

(f) a plan for implementing an assurance of mastery program.

Every other year district reports must include an evaluation of assessment programs. The following criteria must be used in the assessment:

(a) written objectives of the testing program;

(b) names of tests and grade levels tested;

(c) utilization of test results; and

(d) implementation of an assurance of mastery plan.

Statewide Educational Assessment Program

At least once every three years each district must participate in a statewide assessment sampling process which provides normative data. The State Department of Education determines which tests will be used, which districts will be on which curriculum areas.

Assurance of Mastery

Local school boards are required to adopt a policy establishing a process to assure individual mastery in communications and mathematics including identifying and assessing limited English proficiency of students. Beginning in 1986–87, students must be assessed at least once during grades K–3, 4–6, 7–9 and 10–12.

State: Florida

Florida's system of local accountability has three major components. The first is a set of compliance and performance audits of each district. The second is a set of indicators collected from districts to measure the State's progress toward achieving a ranking among the upper quartile of States in educational achievement. The third is a set of mandated student standards.

The primary vehicle used by the State for collecting mandated data related to the progress indicators is the Management Information System (MIS). The MIS produces a variety of annual reports that are routinely disseminated to the legislature; colleges, community colleges, and universities within the State; and local districts. Mandated data is collected during one (or more) of the five specified reporting periods when full-time equivalent (FTE) and average daily membership (ADM) information is submitted by local districts.

The Florida Information Retrieval Network (FIRN), when fully implemented, will serve as the vehicle for collecting data from local districts for the MIS. All 67 local dis..icts are currently linked to the State department of education and to each other via the network. FIRN has three database components: students, staff and finance. At present only the students and staff components are fully operational. One-third of the districts in the State sent information via FIRN during the 1987–88 school year and another third are expected to use it during the 1988–89 school year. Initially, districts submitted parallel sets of data—one manually and one electronically—to test the system. About 10 districts have presently been approved to use FIRN exclusively.

Compliance and Performance Audits

There are three types of audits. First, there are budgetary and program paper audits to ensure that all districts meet minimum standards of compliance with State regulations. These are conducted once every three years on each district. There are no penalties for non-compliance with audit findings. The State department of educatior sends each district an "audit report."

Second, there is an internal audit to look at the funding formula. Once a report is issued the follow-up is handled by the State department of education Deputy Commissioner for Administration.

Third, is an annual audit performed by the auditor general. This audit is administered by the legislature. It is primarily fiscal because of limitations of time and personnel.

The State department of education does the follow-up on all three audits. The department contacts the districts to determine technical assistance needs and preferences.

Indicators of Progress Toward Excellence in Education

Comparative, summary and longitudinal data are collected and published annually on four sets of indicators categorized as input, process, output, and opinion variables. The following district-level information regarding the indicators is collected through MIS unless otherwise stated.

Input indicators

Local districts are required to provide inservice education programs. Approved programs are funded by the State. Inservice activities are coordinated with the annual evaluations of all teachers and principals. Inservice points may be used for recertification.

Other input indicators include:

(a) the percentage of teachers who hold degrees

(b) the percentage of minority teachers

(c) the percent of schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

(d) per pupil expenditures

(e) the average salary of teachers.

Process indicators

(a) the percentage of students in upper-level mathematics classes, science classes, foreign language classes, advanced placement classes, and fine arts classes

(b) the percentage of high school students who have personal career plans on file.

Output indicators

(a) the number of National Merit Commended Scholars and semi-finalists and academic achievement as measured on the SAT, ACT, PSAT, College Board achievement tests

(b) the number of winners and participants in national contests and exams

(c) the placement percentages on occupational proficiency students

(d) the number and percentage of high school seniors who are awarded college scholarships and grants.

Opinion indicators

These include a survey of employers' satisfaction with the work performance of graduates from Florida's public schools.

Student Standards

Pupil Progression Plans

Pupil progression plans are policy documents developed in each school district that were required before the 1983 RAISE legislation. However, the 1983 legislature established that effective July 1, 1985, student performance standards are required to be incorporated in the pupil progression plans for all students in grades 9–12 in order for the district to receive funding through the Florida Education Finance Program.

The 1985 legislature requires district pupil progression plans to provide for the substitution of vocational courses for nonelective courses.

The 1987 legislature requires district pupil progression plans to identify students in grades 9–12 who have a grade point average of 1.5 or below and assist these students in meeting graduation requirements.

Districts do not report information from the pupil progression plans but must show evidence of compliance during their three-year audit by the State department of education.

State Student Assessment Tests (SSAT)

Florida has its own State Student Assessment Tests (SSAT–I at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 and SSAT–II at grades 10–12). SSAT-I tests students in reading, writing, and mathematics based on statewide minimum student performance standards. Passing SSAT–II has been a high school graduation

requirement since 1983. Students have five chances to pass the test: once in 10th grade and two times each in grades 11 and 12.

Uniform grading system

The 1987 legislature requires districts to implement a uniform grading system, beginning with students entering the ninth grade in the 1987-88 school year.

The School Discipline Act of 1984

This act instituted additional data collection requirements to be included in both district and school annual reports on the status of education. The following data are to be included, disaggregated by sex and race and residency status (seasonal, migrant, permanent):

- information on student attendance
- information on dropouts, including an analysis of progress toward identification of potential dropouts and remediation
- incidents of corporal punishment
- in-school and out-of-school suspensions
- expulsions

The Dropout Prevention Act of 1986

This act provided for the implementation of dropout prevention programs during the 1987–88 school year. In order to receive State funds, districts are required to develop comprehensive dropout prevention program plans. School districts submitting a plan but choosing not to implement State-recommended activities must provide evidence that such programs are not needed in the district or the needs of the students are being met through existing programs. *Districts funded in 1987–88 must submit biennial reports to the State department of education evaluating their programs, keep appropriate student records, and provide staff development activities.*

Monitoring Subcontract

The State department of education contracted with MGT of America, Inc. in 1986 to evaluate the impact of RAISE and other reform activities, document problems that arose during and following implementation, identify intended and unintended outcomes, and provide a baseline for programmatic recommendations.

Appendix B

California Model School Accountability Report Card

Adopted by the State Board of Education
Revised (3/28/89)

Statement of Purpose

At the November 1988 General Election, California voters passed Proposition 98, the Classroom Instructional Improvement and Accountability Act. The Act intends to . . .

. . . enable Californians to once again have one of the best public school systems in the nation.

Toward that end, the Act guarantees a minimum, annual, and ongoing level of State support for public schools. It also requires . . .

. . . every local school board to prepare a School Accountability Report Card to guarantee accountability for the dollars spent.

Statement of Basic Requirements

Under Proposition 98, and the directives of the State Board of Education embodied herein, each local school board must do the following:

- By September 30, 1989, or the beginning of the 1989–90 school year, have a process in place for the development and implementation of a School Accountability Report Card for each school in the district.
- At a minimum, the process shall include basic decisions about the format of the School Accountability Report Card; identification of the person(s) responsible for developing statistical and descriptive materials and for developing, conducting, and tabulating any survey(s) to be incorporated; and preparation of a time table of activities leading to actual issuance.

- During the month of November 1989, and each November thereafter, prepare and issue a School Accountability Report Card for each school in the district.
- By November 1990, and no less frequently than each third year thereafter, compare with this model the School Accountability Report Card being issued for each school in the district.
- Incorporate directly in the School Accountability Report Card displays of statistical information regarding student and staff demography, student achievement, course enrollments, and dropouts, as specified in the Statement of Content below. The displays are to be prepared and distributed by the Department of Education based on data from the California Assessment Program, the California Basic Educational Data System, and other sources.
- Complete and incorporate in the School Accountability Report Card displays of information regarding expenditures, services offered, attendance, class sizes and teaching loads, student support services workloads, and school crime. The displays are to be prepared and distributed by the Department of Education.
- Prepare and conduct surveys of staff, parents (and guardians), and students (grades 7 through 12). The survey instruments may draw from lists of sample questions prepared and distributed by the Department of Education. The surveys shall address, at a minimum, the assessment areas specified in the Statement of Content. Survey instruments should avoid the use of questions or other interrogatives that effectively evaluate the performance of a single individual. The surveys should be conducted toward the end of *each* school year, but must be conducted no less than every third year. Results of the surveys conducted shall be reported in the next School Accountability Report Card issued after their administration. The first School Accountability Report Card may include the results of any survey effort undertaken prior to the adoption of this model where appropriate.
- Following each comparison against this model, determine whether variances, if any, are necessary to account for local needs. If not, the district's School Accountability Report Card shall be aligned with the model. If so, permission to continue the variances shall be requested from the State Board of Education. The State Board shall grant permission to continue variances where local needs are demonstrated.

Statement of Philosophy

This model has been prepared with the goal of guiding local school boards and school district staff in the development of School Accountability Report Cards that . . .

- are informative and useful to the primary audience—the parents and guardians of students who attend local public schools;
- are a useful exercise in assessing the resources, operations, achievements, programs, policies, and plans at each school;
- are consistent not only with the requirements but with the spirit of Proposition 98;
- contain information that is comparable and uniform statewide to the maximum extent feasible; and
- are not unnecessarily burdensome to the individuals charged with the responsibility of preparing and issuing them, nor unnecessarily costly to duplicate and distribute.

Statement of Recommendations

The State Board of Education recommends all of the following to the maximum extent feasible and practical at the local level.

The School Accountability Report Card should be a "friendly" and informative document, developed by people with a genuine desire to have parents, guardians, and other readers understand what is happening at the school and why. It should be pleasing to the eye and stimulate interest. It should be taken as seriously and developed as sensitively as the Annual Report of any important business or industrial enterprise.

The School Accountability Report Card should be a summation of what has been happening at the school. It should also be a "blueprint" for continuing and enhancing the successful aspects of the school's operation, while implementing necessary improvements.

The School Accountability Report Card should emphasize the positive achievements and progress of the school. Pride in accomplishments and in programs should always be taken where justified. At the same time, though, it should focus both on *real* problems confronting the school and on the plans and policies designed to address them.

Where descriptive statements are used in the School Accountability Report Card, they should be prefaced by (or include) a frame of reference (or explanatory material) which gives the reader a means of evaluating or placing into perspective the information supplied. The document should be designed to "make sense" to the readers.

The School Accountability Report Card for each school should be developed with the assistance of an existing school site council or other body encompassing representation from the school board, school administration, teachers, student support services personnel, classified staff, parents (and guardians), and students (at the upper elementary and secondary levels), as well as key contacts with the local community.

A summary of the School Accountability Report Card should be prepared, which extracts key elements embodied within the document. It may accompany the document itself or be a separate publication, provided that the full document is available upon request. The summary should represent a "good faith" effort to incorporate all matters of significance, especially in the area of student achievement, whether or not favorable to the school.

Immediately following issuance of the School Accountability Report Card (and any summary document prepared) by the local school board, the parent or guardian of each student enrolled at the school should be so informed by a notice sent home with the student, or by any other means customarily used to inform parents and guardians of important developments. A copy of the School Accountability Report Card (and/or the summary document) should be made available free-of-charge to each parent or guardian upon request, and a copy should be sent automatically and without charge to each of the local news media—newspapers, radio and television stations.

The School Accountability Report Card (and any summary document prepared) should be included with any application for the California School Recognition Program or the National School Recognition Program, and should be made available for use during Program Quality Reviews, Western Association of Schools and Colleges' (WASC) accreditation reviews, and similar types of activities.

Statement of Content

At a minimum, each School Accountability Report Card must contain the information listed below. Unless otherwise noted, the information provided must be the most current available to the local school board at the time the School Accountability Report Card is prepared for issuance. Unless otherwise noted, statistical information may be estimated, but the estimates must reflect a "good faith" effort at accuracy and reliability. Some items within the assessment areas listed are identified as being applicable only to specific types of schools, but most are applicable to all schools. Where a given item is applicable to a given school but cannot be completed, the local school board may modify the item appropriately, provided the reasons for that action are stated in the School Accountability Report Card.[1]

For convenience in using this document, the assessment areas to be covered in the School Accountability Report Card are HIGHLIGHTED in capital letters, and the specific content items are keyed as follows:

* Information to be prepared and distributed by the Department of Education for direct incorporation in the School Accountability Report Card.

** Department of Education to prepare and distribute a display of information to be completed at the local level and incorporated in the School Accountability Report Card.

*** Information or statement to be prepared locally. Department of Education to provide examples.

**** Mandatory survey item. Department of Education to provide a list of sample questions.

PERSONAL STATEMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL

*** As chief administrator of the school, the principal provides an introduction to the School Accountability Report Card, sharing with the readers why and how the document was developed. The statement also embodies the principal's overall assessment of the school—

[1] For example, the model requires an indication of certain information about the school's library. If the school has no library, the School Accountability Report Card cannot simply ignore the item, but must indicate that no library exists.

its goals, directions, and effectiveness—and expresses any objectives he or she has for current and future years.

SCHOOL PROFILE

* Basic demographic information about the student body, including: (1) composition by gender and ethnicity; (2) special characteristics; and (3) changes over time.

* Composition by ethnicity of the certificated and classified personnel at the school, and how it has changed over time.

*** General size (land area and population) of the attendance area served by the school, the ethnic composition of the area, and other key aspects of the local community deemed particularly interesting or important.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

* California Assessment Program (CAP) results, including: (1) the school's performance in relation to the statewide average and to its comparison group (relative ranks); (2) changes in performance over time and progress toward State targets, and (3) performance by ethnic group where possible.

* Results of the California Physical and Health-Related Fitness Test.

*** Results of any other assessments of student achievement employed at the school in relation to some standard benchmark so that parents, guardians, and other readers can better understand the school's relative performance. (This is particularly important for those schools where CAP results are not available.)

*** For elementary schools, the general performance expectations or standards at the school for students in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2, and the policies in place to ensure communication with parents and guardians about the performance of children in these grades.

* For high schools, selected information concerning course enrollments (including enrollments in sequenced vocational courses and Advanced Placement courses), performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and students actually enrolling in the University of California, California State University, and community colleges.

*** For high schools, any assessment possible (even if anecdotal) concerning subsequent advanced training or job placement by students participating in vocational courses.

ATTENDANCE/DROPOUTS

** In relation to total school enrollment during the preceding year, the number and percentage of students actually attending classes, having "excused" absences, and having "unexcused" absences, and changes over time.

* For high schools, the dropout rate by grade level (for grades 10 through 12), including changes over time.

*** A description of programs and policies in effect (or planned) at the school to promote actual attendance and reduce dropouts, including commentary on special factors that may tend to increase or decrease actual attendance at the school and special efforts targeted toward "at risk" students.

EXPENDITURES/SERVICES OFFERED

** Estimates for the preceding fiscal year of the total expenditures made for the school, and estimates of what those expenditures purchased, separated into (1) direct pupil services costs, (2) school-site costs, and (3) district costs. The display of expenditure data may be modified, as appropriate, to prevent disclosure of the salaries and benefits paid to a single individual. The display must express amount in both total and per student terms.

*** Listing and description of significant services offered at the school.

CLASS SIZES/TEACHING LOADS

** The distribution of class sizes and the median class size at the school for each of the past three years.

*** A description of any plans or policies that have reduced class sizes at the school, or which are intended to reduce class sizes over time.

** For high schools and middle schools with departmentalized programs, the distribution of teaching loads, and the median teaching load, at the school for each of the past three years.

*** For high schools and middle schools with departmentalized programs, a description of plans, policies, or actions that have reduced

teaching loads at the school, or which are intended to reduce teaching loads over time.

TEACHER ASSIGNMENT

*** The nature and extent of any misassignments of teachers during the past year, whether they have continued into the present year, and the reasons they have occurred.

TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

*** Whether the basic instructional materials in use at the school are aligned with the district's curriculum as established by law and support fully the school's instructional program.

*** Whether there are sufficient basic instructional materials to support fully the school's instructional program. If not, the reasons why and the nature of any plans to correct the situation.

*** Whether there are sufficient supplementary instructional materials (such as workbooks) to support fully the school's instructional program.

*** Whether ancillary instructional materials (such as maps, dictionaries, and wall charts) are up-to-date and fully support the school's instructional program, and a description of the policies in place to ensure that materials remain current.

*** The sufficiency of instructional supplies and equipment (especially for fine art, science, and vocational classes), including educational technology (such as computer hardware and software, motion picture projectors, and films) wherever appropriate to the school's instructional program.

*** A description of the school's library, including the number of volumes, the types of materials, the hours of operation, policies for acquisition of new materials, and whether the services of a credentialed librarian are available.

**** Opinions of staff (as appropriate), parents (and guardians), and students concerning the quality and sufficiency of instructional materials.

COUNSELING AND OTHER STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

** The numbers of counselors and other student support services personnel (i.e., school psychologists, social workers, nurses, child

welfare and attendance personnel, speech and hearing specialists, and librarians) at the school, as well as an indication of their workloads in relation to professionally-recognized standards, statewide averages, or both.

*** A description of any policies related to counseling and student support services, indicating such things as how often students might be expected to receive counseling and what the range of services available to students and families is.

**** Opinions of staff (as appropriate), parents (and guardians), and students concerning the quality and extent of counseling and other student support services offered at the school.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

*** Whether the school has had any difficulties in securing qualified substitute teachers and about how much of the instructional time substitutes are used, and the reasons why.

SAFETY

*** A description of plans, policies, and procedures in place which help ensure student safety, such as emergency plans, playground supervision policies, and protocols regarding the use of potentially dangerous instructional equipment and chemicals stored or used at the school.

** Crime at the school in the categories specified in the *Standard School Crime Report* in relation to statewide and, if appropriate, district-wide averages, showing changes over time.

*** If security personnel are employed at the school, a description of the nature and extent of the security effort and an estimate of how much is being spent to fund it.

**** Opinions of staff, parents (and guardians), and students concerning general safety at the school.

CLEANLINESS

*** A description of policies on regular cleaning of the school, the response time for critical maintenance, the timetable for preventive maintenance projects, and other information about the basic cleanliness and operation of the facility that would be of interest to parents (and guardians).

*** An indication of the funding devoted to basic cleaning and maintenance of the school, including a description of factors which tend to make costs higher than average (such as severe climate, age, or type of use) or lower than average.

**** Opinions of staff, parents (and guardians), and students concerning general cleanliness of the school and how well it is maintained.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

*** An estimate of classroom square footage per student, the size of major non-classroom facilities, and whether the number of students at the school is generally under, over, or about in line with the facility's design capacity.

*** Opinions of staff (as appropriate), parents (and guardians), and students concerning the adequacy of the school facility as a place to teach and to learn.

TEACHER EVALUATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT

*** A description of the evaluation process for the teachers at the school, the process by which the teachers' professional growth plans are developed, and how the plans relate to the evaluations.

*** A description of how decisions are made about professional improvement opportunities to be made available through the school.

CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE AND CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

*** A description of the policies at the school to promote an effective learning environment, including special recognition or awards for outstanding achievement or effort. In other words, what is the school doing to motivate student attendance, effort, and achievement?

*** A description of general policies regarding homework, including approximately how much homework parents or guardians should expect their children to receive and complete.

*** A description of the school's policies regarding "in house" discipline, i.e., discipline short of formal suspension or expulsion, including how those policies are communicated to parents, guardians, and students.

*** The nature and extent of tardiness and truancy, and of the policies in place to address them.

*** The nature and extent of suspensions and expulsions, including breakdowns by grade level and by gender and ethnicity.

*** Opinions of staff (as appropriate), parents (and guardians), and students concerning the general state of classroom discipline and the climate for learning.

TEACHER AND STAFF TRAINING

*** A description of the nature and extent of staff development activities provided for teachers, student support services personnel, administrators, and classified employees at the school, including the processes by which these activities are shaped and decided upon.

*** How many instructional days are used for staff development activities for teachers at the school, and any alternatives under consideration for shifting staff development activities to non-instructional time without diminishing their effectiveness and benefit.

*** An estimate of the funding dedicated to staff development activities in relation to the school's total budget.

*** A description of how mentor teachers are used at the school.

**** Opinions of staff (as appropriate) concerning the nature, quality, and sufficiency of staff development activities.

CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

*** Specific curriculum improvement efforts undertaken last year, and efforts now underway or planned over the next several years.

*** An estimate of the funding dedicated to curriculum improvement efforts in relating to the school's total budget.

**** Opinions of staff (as appropriate), parents (and guardians), and students concerning involvement with and quality of curriculum improvement efforts.

QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

*** A description of the school's mission and goals statement, how it was developed, the process by which it is reviewed, and how it is reflected in the school's day-to-day operations.

*** Whether the school's instructional program is aligned with the district's curriculum as established in accordance with law, including

consideration of the Curriculum Frameworks, adopted by the State Board of Education, and the Model Curriculum Standards.

*** A description of the school's "leadership team"—that is, the people involved in giving the school direction and purpose.

*** A description of any outstanding issues from the school's most recent Program Quality Review or WASC accreditation report.

*** A description of any special awards or recognition the school has received during the past year.

*** Policy statement concerning the attainment of fluency in English by students who are limited English proficient, and an indication of the relative numbers of students who have attained fluency.

*** Policy statement concerning the "mainstreaming" of students with exceptional needs, and an indication of the relative numbers of students with exceptional needs who are included in regular instructional activities.

*** Opinions of staff (as appropriate), parents (and guardians), and students concerning the general quality of the school's instructional program and leadership.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

*** Number of parents (and guardians) regularly involved in volunteer activities (such as the site council(s) and parent/teacher/student organization) and, in general terms, whether their ethnic composition is similar to that of the community served by the school.

*** The means used to keep the community regularly informed about school activities (such as newsletters), and how interested individuals can obtain more information. Reference must be made to any documents available for public inspection which have a significant bearing on the school's operation and performance, such as Program Quality Reviews and WASC accreditation reports.

*** Any involvement of staff and students at the school with matters of concern to the local community which are a regular part of school activities.

*** Services received from (or cooperative programs with) other public agencies, such as police and fire departments or local hospitals.

*** Partnership arrangements with local business or industry, or any plan to develop those types of arrangements in the future.

*** "Compacts"—that is, agreements or contracts involving students, parents (and guardians), teachers, school administrators, and/or outside parties that encourage student attendance and achievement through awards, incentives, or other means.

**** Opinions of staff (as appropriate), parents (and guardians), and students concerning the nature and extent of communication and interaction between the school and the community it serves.

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