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ABSTRACT

While the publication of school report cards and profiles is common in a number of states, their contents and formats vary as they represent the concerns and initiatives of policymakers. Over recent years, several studies have been made of school report cards and profiles. In this investigation, the focus is a comparison of report cards and profiles currently in use in the eastern United States and a summary of the commonalities and differences in the 19 southern and eastern states. Many states (13 of 16 that use student performance data) use state-specific tests as a measure. Most states report socioeconomic data about students, families, and the community. Many states provide statewide averages and percentages for comparison with local data, but there is no information provided about factors that actually contribute to higher or lower student performance. The next step must be identifying these factors. (Contains 3 tables and 3 tables in an appendix of variables in the analyses of report cards from 11 states.) (SLD)

A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REPORT CARDS ON SCHOOLS PRODUCED IN EIGHT EASTERN STATES AND A SYNTHESIS OF REPORT CARD STUDIES IN NINETEEN STATES

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A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REPORT CARDS ON SCHOOLS PRODUCED IN EIGHT EASTERN STATES AND A SYNTHESIS OF REPORT CARD STUDIES IN NINETEEN STATES

By Russell L. French and Gordon Bobbett[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The publication of school report cards and school profiles is now common in a number of states. Their contents and formats vary from state to state, representing the concerns and initiatives of policymakers and the efforts of state educational agencies to address those needs.

Over the past several years, the authors have conducted detailed analyses of the report cards produced in Tennessee and Arkansas, and, in 1993, they presented a detailed comparison of report cards/profiles disseminated in 11 Southeastern states. In the investigation reported here, the focus is a comparison of report cards/profiles currently in use in the Eastern United States and summarization of the commonalities and differences found in the 19 Southern and Eastern states.

II. METHODOLOGY

Requests for copies of report cards/school reports/school profiles and explanatory information were made to 10 Eastern and Northeastern states. Eight states provided materials that represented reports that could rightly be classified as "report cards" offering information that might be desired by parents and citizens as well as local educators. These states were Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. Vermont sent copies of its annual state report, but this report did not provide information comprehensible to the man on the street or useful in studying an individual school district.

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As in the previous study of report cards in Southeastern states, each report card/profile and the information accompanying it were analyzed for similarities and differences in five categories: 1) instruments used to measure student performance, 2) student outcomes reported and the procedure for reporting them, 3) student characteristics reported, 4) school and community factors presented, and 5) statistical procedures used in evaluating data. Findings of the study are reported in each of these five categories.

III. FINDINGS

Instruments Used To Measure Student Performance

As anticipated, instruments and procedures used to measure student performance differ from state to state. Table 1 displays the findings:

Table 1. Instruments And Procedures Used To Measure Student Performance In Eight Eastern States

State	Instruments/Procedures	Comments
Connecticut	Connecticut Mastery Tests, Grades 4, 6, 8 Reading, Writing, Mathematics	Reported as % of students at/above state goal and % of students at/above remedial standards
	Physical Fitness Tests (1-mile walk/run, sit and reach exercise, situps, pull-ups)	Reported as % of students meeting national standards on each test
	Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), graduates	Reported as number of students taking the test and the average scores for each test (verbal, math) by gender, race/ethnicity (Asian American, Black, Hispanic, White) and income (under $20,000, $20,000-70,000, over $70,000. Also reported is percentage of test takers scoring 600 and above.

	Credits earned in selected courses: Algebra I or equivalent, English Literature, Foreign Language (3 years or more), The Arts (2 years or more), high school courses for college credit.	Reported by gender and race/ethnicity (see previously listed categories).
	Credits earned by last graduating class: Algebra, Literature, Laboratory Sciences, Vocational (2 or more yrs.), Arts (2 or more yrs.), Foreign Language (3 or more yrs.)	Reported as totals for each category
Delaware	No student outcome data reported.	
Maryland	Maryland Functional Tests, Grades 9, 11 Mathematics, Writing, Reading, Citizenship	Reported as % students meeting State school standards: Excellent, Satisfactory, Passing.
	Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), Grades 3, 5, 8, Reading, Mathematics, Social Science, Science	Again reported as % students meeting state school standards.
	California Test of Basic Skills/4, Grades 3, 5, 8, Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics	Reported by median percentile for school
	Program Completion	Reported as % students attaining University of Maryland system requirements, % students attaining Occupational Program Requirements and % students attaining both.

Massachusetts	Massachusetts Educational Assessment Program (MAEP), Grades 4, 8, 12, Reading, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Writing	Reported as % students attaining proficiency levels I- (low) through IV. Proficiency levels are behaviorally anchored. The average scaled scores by grade level are also reported, together with a comparison score band for schools with similar socioeconomic characteristics.
	(High Schools) Number of Advanced Placement tests taken in English Literature/Composition, U.S. History, Calculus, Biology, other.	Reported as number taken in each subject and total number
New Hampshire	No student outcome data reported	
New Jersey	Unnamed standardized achievement test (could be one of several), Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics	Reported as % students meeting state standard
	8th Grade Early Warning Test (Basic Skills), Reading, Mathematics, Writing	Reported as % students at Level I - satisfactory, Level II - marginal, Level III-unsatisfactory.
	(High Schools) 9th Grade Proficiency Tests, Reading, Writing, Mathematics	Reported as % students passing by race/ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander
	(High Schools) Number of seniors taking the SAT.	Reported as average verbal and average math scores for classes of the past two years. State average scores are provided for comparison.
	Advanced Placement Tests: Mathematics (Calculus), Spanish, U.S. History, Biology, etc.	Reported as number of students taking tests and number scoring 3 or better
	(High Schools) Graduation rate	Reported as % of students who were enrolled in the 9th grade

Pennsylvania	(Elementary And Middle Schools) Pennsylvania Reading and Mathematics Tests	Reported as % students in quartile groups (Top, High-Middle, Low-Middle, Bottom)
	(Elementary And Middle Schools) Sixth Grade Writing Assessment	Reported as % students in each of five levels: Excellent (scores of 12, 11, 10), Good (scores of 9, 8), Fair (scores of 7, 6), Weak (scores of 5, 4), Poor (scores of 3, 2)
	(Elementary Schools) Metropolitan Achievement Tests: Reading, Mathematics, all grade levels	Reported as % students in quartile groups (see comments for Pa. Reading and Math Tests).
	(Middle School) California Achievement Tests, all grade levels	Reported as % students in quartile groups (see above).
	(Elementary And Middle Schools) Amount of Writing	Reported as % students required to write paragraphs (very often, often, sometimes, rarely, never). Student self-reports.
	(High Schools) Pennsylvania Reading And Math Tests, Grade 11	Reported as % students in quartile groups
	(High Schools) Pennsylvania Writing Assessment, Grade 9	Reported as % students in quartile groups
	(High Schools) Metropolitan Achievement Tests, Grades 10, 11	Reported as % students in quartile groups
	(High Schools) AP Course Participation	Reported as % students in all AP courses, 9th, 10th, 11th grades.
	(High Schools) Completion of Volunteer Community Service	Reported as % students completing 60 hours

Rhode Island	Metropolitan Achievement Tests: Reading, Math, Writing	Reported as average percentile ranking of the district and comparison with national norms. Also reported as % of students in district meeting basic proficiency standard (40th percentile or higher) in grades 4, 8, 10
	Writing Assessment, Grades 3, 6	Reported as % students achieving "Good" or above rating (state standard)
	Health Knowledge Assessment, Grades 3, 6, 8, 10	Reported as average percentile score
	Compensatory Education Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) Grades 2 and above	Reported as a gain score denoting the difference before and after instruction. Rhode Island performance standard is 1 NCE.
	SAT Scores	Reported as average scores (verbal, math, total) for all students and college-bound students.

Analysis of this table indicates that two states (Delaware, New Hampshire) do not report any student outcome data. Five of the other six states (Massachusetts excluded) in the sample use both state-developed tests and at least one recognized national achievement test (California Achievement Battery, Metropolitan Achievement Tests, etc.) to measure aspects of student, school and/or school district performance. Test results are presented differently across the states, and in five states (Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) indicators other than test scores are included as measures of performance.

Unique areas of assessment are found in Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Pennsylvania provides information on the percentage of high school students completing 60 hours or more of volunteer service

in the community and the amount of writing students report that they are required to do. Connecticut reports percentage of students meeting national physical fitness standards on four performance assessments, and Rhode Island reports student health knowledge and gain scores for Compensatory Education students.

Student Outcomes Reported

Table 1 also provides the information necessary for comparison of the ways in which student outcomes are reported in the six states reporting them. As previously mentioned, the rubrics for reporting vary across the states. Connecticut reports its Mastery Test results as percentages of students at or above a state goal and at or above remedial standards. Physical fitness test results are reported as percentage of students meeting national standards. SAT results are reported by average scores (verbal, math) for racial/ethnic groups and family income levels.

Maryland reports most test results as percentages of students meeting pre-determined state school standards. This state also reports achievement test results by median school percentiles and percentages of graduates attaining state requirements for post-secondary education.

Massachusetts also reports outcomes as the percentage of students attaining each of five behaviorally-anchored proficiency levels. In addition, the state reports the school's average scaled scores by grade level and provides a comparison band of scaled scores for schools with similar socioeconomic characteristics.

New Jersey's reporting approach is similar to that of Connecticut, Maryland, and Massachusetts; i.e., percentages of students meeting each of three levels of state standards. Like Connecticut, New Jersey also reports percentages of students passing state proficiency tests by racial/ethnic group. SAT scores are reported by average verbal and math scores for the past two years, and state averages are provided for

comparison. New Jersey also reports the number of students taking each of several Advanced Placement examinations and the number of students who scored 3 or above (levels usually associated with award of college credit).

Pennsylvania reports most test results as percentages of students scoring in each of four quartile groups. However, writing assessment results for a school are reported as percentages of students scoring in each of five levels (excellent to poor).

Rhode Island reports average percentile rankings for the school district and comparisons with national norms for achievement test results. This state also reports the percentage of students in the district meeting state-imposed proficiency standards. As noted previously, Rhode Island is the only state in the group studied to report results in compensatory education, where gain scores denoting the difference before and after instruction are provided. There is a state standard for gain in this area. SAT scores are reported as verbal and mathematics average scores for all students and college-bound students.

It is interesting to note that while methods of reporting student outcomes vary across these states, five of them (Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island) have developed state performance standards and report percentages of students meeting the standard or the various levels of standards. Two states (Connecticut, New Jersey) report some or most test results by racial/ethnic groups and gender. One state (Connecticut) reports results by family income level. Most of these states provide state or national averages and percentages for comparative purposes, but only Massachusetts provides a means of comparing school outcomes with like schools.

Levels of Outcomes Reported

The eight states differ in the levels of information reported as

indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Levels of Data Presented In State Report Cards

State	Performance Data	School/District Characteristics
Connecticut	District Level School Level	District Level School Level
Delaware*	District Level	District Level
Maryland	District Level	District Level
Massachusetts	District Level School Level	District Level School Level
New Hampshire*	District Level	District Level
New Jersey	School Level (No District Level Provided if available)	School Level
Pennsylvania	District Level School Level	District Level School Level
Rhode Island	District Level	District Level

Of the eight states studied, three (Connecticut, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania) develop both district and school level report cards/profiles. New Jersey may create profiles at both levels, but only school level report cards were sent. As indicated in Table 1, two states (Delaware, New Hampshire) provide no student outcome data, only data pertaining to school/community characteristics. New Jersey's report card is somewhat unique in that it is targeted to parents, and explanations of the reason(s) for including each item are provided on the report card itself. Although several of the states provide explanatory and interpretative materials, Pennsylvania's interpretation manual is the most comprehensive. That state also provides local educators a "Manual of Strategies For Release to Press and Public."

School And Community Characteristics

Inclusions of school and community characteristics were examined in relationship to the categories used in the previous study of Southeastern

states: student characteristics, school/community characteristics, and district/community financial characteristics. Table 3 displays the results.

Table 3: Student, School And Community Characteristics Identified In Report Cards

State	Student Characteristics	School/District Characteristics	Community/District Financial Characteristics
Connecticut	•Percent free-reduced lunch •Percent non-English home language •Percent juniors and seniors working more than 16 hrs. per week •Percent kindergartners who attended preschool, nursery school, Headstart •Percent students who have used alcohol, tobacco, other drugs (self-report) •Activities of June graduates (higher education - 4 yr., 2 yr., other; work force, military, employed, unemployed •Percent student participation in school activities (general academic clubs, fitness/intramurals, career-oriented clubs, service clubs, music, athletics)	•Enrollment and change from previous year •Special programs; e.g., bilingual, ESL, gifted, migrant, extended day kindergarten Pre-K, special ed. •Average class size •Number students per counselor, social worker, school psychologist, library media specialist, FTE administrator, FTE staff •Percent professional staff with Masters degree and above •Percent professional staff trained as mentors, assessors, cooperating teachers •Professional staff average years of experience	•Teacher starting salary •Teacher salary at Masters maximum •Expenditures (total and per pupil) for - instruction - equipment - pupil support services - administration - plant operation and maintenance - transportation - instruction and administrative support services - food services - students tutored outside school - land, building debt services

Connecticut (continued)		• Percent minority professional staff • Percent parents as resources (volunteers, student preparedness, homework assistance, parents' group, open house) • Percent student attendance • Percent dropouts (Fall to Fall) • Hours of instructional time (hrs. per yr., days per yr., length of day) • Learning resources available at school (library media ctr., computer lab, school cable access, telecommunication access to outside information sources, library aides, library media specialists) • Hours instruction per year in each subject area including arts, computer ed, technology education) • Results of parent survey (satisfaction, communication with school, etc.)	

Connecticut (continued)		•Professional development of teachers and Professional staff (average school days and other days per teacher) •Average number days of absence for teachers and other professional staff •Staffing (race/ethnicity, gender, FTE count for all professional staff and non-certified staff •Average class size •Drug education program (middle and secondary schools) •Elective program offerings (high schools) •Graduation requirements	
Delaware	•Percent regular and special education students •Percent enrollment by racial/ethnic groups (Indian, Black, Asian, Hispanic, White Minority) •Number of graduates	•Total enrollment •Area in square miles •Average daily attendance (number and percent) •Non-public schools (number in district and number and percent of students enrolled) •Number of teachers •Percent teachers by gender and race (white, black, other)	•Revenue per pupil (local, state, federal) •Expenditures per pupil •Average teacher salary •Scheduled teacher salary (beginning, middle, top) •Full valuation per pupil

Delaware (continued)		•Percent teachers with Masters degree and above •Average teacher age and years of experience •Student/teacher ratio •Student/professional staff ratios (administrators, support, other)	
Maryland	•Number and percent students receiving special services (LEP, Chapter I, Free-reduced lunch, special education) •Graduates' plans (post-secondary education, employment related to high school program, employment unrelated, military, employment and school, other)	•Percent student attendance (1-6, 7-12) •Number and percent dropouts (3 years) •Promotion rate •Enrollment (Pre-K, K, 1-6, 7-12, Special Ed. other) •Number and percent of entrants and withdrawals •Number instructional staff per 1000 students •Number professional support staff per 1000 students •Number instructional assistants per 1000 students •Average length of school day and year •Number and percent 1st graders with kindergarten experience •School improvement notes for each district	•Wealth per pupil •Per pupil expenditure

Massachusetts	•Percent students suspended out-of-school •Percent students suspended in school •Percent students by race/ethnicity •Percent students Limited English Proficient and first language non-English •Percent students in special education and percent integrated •Percent students in occupational education •Percent students low income (AFDC and Federal guidelines) •Graduate plans (post-secondary education, work or military, other) •Status of vocational-technical graduates (percent full time education, related employment, unrelated employment, military, unemployed, not in labor force)	•Percent student attendance at each level (elementary, middle, secondary) •Percent students retained •Percent dropouts (past 4 years) •Percent racial/ethnic groups in district (Asian, black, Native American, White, Hispanic, other) •Percent households with children •Educational attainment levels - percent less than 9 - percent some high school - percent diploma - percent some college - percent Bachelors degree and higher •Percent of children attending public and non-public schools •Number of schools with grade ranges and enrollments •Percents of available school staff (teachers, other instructional, administrators, support, service)	•Median family income •Integrated cost per pupil •School district revenues (total, percent state, federal, local, municipal, other) •Expenditures per pupil and change over two years •Average teacher salary

New Hampshire		•Number and percent of dropouts (7-12, 7-8, 9-12) •District Average Daily Membership (elementary, middle/junior high, high school, other) •Number of students in public schools and academies •Student/teacher ratio •Number of graduates •Graduates' plans (post-secondary education)	•Average teacher salary •Valuations (property tax assessments, and school tax notes) •Equalized valuation per pupil •Per pupil expenditure (elementary, middle/junior, high school, total) •Amount of catasphrophic aid •Amount of foundation aid
New Jersey	•Percent students by race (White, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander) (2 yrs.) •Percent students new to school •Percent students free-reduced lunch •Percent students in special programs (basic skills remediation, bilingual/ESL, special education, gifted/talented) •Percent students in athletics, arts, non-athletic activities	•Hours per day of instruction •Number of students per teacher, administrator, staff member •Percent staff attendance •Percent instructional staff with advanced degrees •Enrollment past two years and percent change (by grade level)	•Revenues (percent state, local, other) •Expenditures (percent instruction, student services, administration, facilities) •Percent budget for teacher salaries, for administrator salaries •Cost per pupil

New Jersey (continued)	•Student behavior (Number of incidents of substance abuse, vandalism, violence, and estimated cost of vandalism)		
Pennsylvania	•Hours per day students watch TV (6 or more, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 or less) •Percent students with pre-school experience •Percent students reporting parental encouragement to do best •Percent special education •Student expectations (percent) for advanced degree, college degree, post high school education, high school diploma	•Average class size •Number students per teacher, counselor, Health staff member, librarian •Percent teacher absence for professional development and non-related matters •Number titles per student in library •Percent stability in students from previous year •Percent student attendance •Percent graduates to post-secondary education •Percent graduates to military and work •Percent retention in grades 9, 10, 11 •Regional accreditation status •Percent graduates in academic/college prep, general education, vocational/ technical, exceptional/other	•Percent budget for instructional expenditures for regular ed., special ed., vocational ed., adult ed., community/junior college, other •Percent budget for support services (broken into categories) •Percent budget for other activities; e.g., food services, facilities acquisition, student activities

Rhode Island	•Number and percent students in special programs (voc./tech, spec. ed., LEP, Computer ed., Minority, Adult ed. •Percent students free and reduced lunch	•Number and percent students in public and non-public schools •State and regional accreditation status •Average class size (K-6, 7-12) •Number of secondary core courses (math, sciences, English, social studies) •Graduation requirements	•Median family income •Per capita income •Property value per pupil •Equalized municipal tax rate •Local educational revenues as percent of total budget •Revenues (local, state, federal, other) •Expenditures (total and per pupil) for - all programs - general instruction - instructional and administrative support - non-instructional services - facilities management - transportation - special programs (voc/tech, Special ed., LEP, Computer ed., gifted and talented - instructional materials per pupil (3 yrs)

Examination of Table 3 shows that no two states report exactly the same student, school and community factors. However, all but New Hampshire report some factors in each of the three categories used as organizers. Connecticut's inclusions are the most comprehensive. Several states report factors not previously found in these investigations; e.g., number of instances of substance abuse, violence and vandalism in a school, student reports of hours spent watching television, student expectations and plans for the post-high school years. These reports may reflect the public's concern for school safety

and security and educator concerns for student and home factors that influence schooling and student achievement. Several of them provide data related to accomplishment of the National Education Goals. This relationship may or may not be a conscious purpose of some inclusions. The investigators received no explanatory information. Whatever they reflect, some of these "new" inclusions offer opportunity to study their statistical impact on student outcomes.

Statistical Procedures Used In Evaluating Data

The statistical presentation of data in the eight sets of report cards/profiles has been discussed previously. None of these report cards report statistical analyses of the impact of student variables, school/community characteristics, or financial factors on student outcomes. Therefore, there is no way for readers to determine which factors that can be modified should be modified.

IV. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS IN NINETEEN STATE REPORT CARDS

As indicated at the outset of this paper, the completion of the present study also makes it possible to synthesize findings about report card inclusions in 19 states, the eight eastern states examined here and the 11 southern states previously investigated. Appendix A contains tables from the southern states' study which parallel those for the eastern states displayed in the preceding pages of this paper. Examination of the two sets of tables produces the following information:

Student Performance

- Thirteen (13) states (Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia) report student performance on state-specific (state developed tests.
- Twelve (12) of the 19 states (Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia) report student performance on non-state specific

achievement tests.

- Only three states (Delaware, Kentucky and New Hampshire) report no student achievement data.

- Six (6) states (Arkansas, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia) report some form of data related to Advanced Placement Examinations--most often the number of students taking AP exams in various subject areas.

- Unique outcome measures reported include physical fitness (Ct.), completion of volunteer service in the community (Pa.), and health knowledge (RI).

- Two states (South Carolina and Tennessee) report actual student gains versus expected student gains.

Levels of Performance Data

- Sixteen (16) states (all but Kentucky, New Jersey and South Carolina) report district level student performance data. South Carolina substitutes data for clusters of like schools.

- Eleven (11) states (Connecticut, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia) provide school level data.

- Six (6) states, all southern, display grade level data. They are Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Student Characteristics

- Nine (9) states (Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, South Carolina, Tennessee) report percentages of students on free or reduced lunch programs.

- Eight (8) states (Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Jersey, South Carolina) report percentages of students in two or more racial/ethnic categories.

- Seven (7) states report either the status (employment, educational participation) of recent graduates or the post-graduation plans of the most recent graduating class. These states include Connecticut, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania.

- Six (6) states (Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) report percentages of students in compensatory education programs.

- Six (6) states (Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee) report percentages of students in special education programs.

- The more unique entries in the student characteristics category include

  - percentage of students where non-English is the home language (Connecticut)

  - percentages of juniors and seniors who work (Connecticut)

  - percentage of kindergarten students who were pre-school attendees (Connecticut, Pennsylvania)

  - percentages of students who were habitual truants (Florida, North Carolina)

  - percentages of students who used alcohol, drugs, tobacco (Connecticut, New Jersey)

  - percentage of students who received corporal punishment (Florida)

  - percentages of students suspended or expelled (Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts)

  - percentage of students new to the school (New Jersey)

  - percentages of students participating in various school activities (Connecticut, New Jersey)

  - average hours per day students report watching television (Pennsylvania)

  - percentages of students reporting forms of parental encouragement (Pennsylvania).

School/District/Community Characteristics

The 19 states investigated reported more than 40 different school or school district variables. Characteristics reported by eight or more states in some form included:

- percentage of student attendance (Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia),

- enrollments or percentage change in enrollments (Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia),

- student/teacher ratios (Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia),

- student/staff ratios (Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia,

West Virginia),

- percentage of student dropouts (Arkansas, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia),
- completion/graduation rates (Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia),
- percentage of staff with advanced degrees or certification (Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, North Carolina, West Virginia).

Among the interesting variables reported by one or more states were

- class size or oversized classes (Connecticut, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, West Virginia),
- racial composition of staff (Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida),
- percentage of parents serving as resources (Connecticut),
- average instructional time in hours per day and/or days per year (Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia)
- average days of teacher or educator (by group) absence (Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina)
- average hours/days of teacher professional development (Connecticut),
- percentage/number of non-public schools in the district and/or percentage of students attending and home-schooled (Delaware, Massachusetts, Rhode Island),
- promotion rate (Florida, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia),
- racial composition of the community (Massachusetts),
- percentage of homes containing children (Massachusetts),
- educational attainment levels of household members (Arkansas, Massachusetts, North Carolina),
- percentages of upper Career Ladder teachers (Tennessee),
- school improvement notes (Maryland).

Community/District/School Financial Characteristics

- The most commonly reported financial characteristic (13 states) is per pupil expenditure (Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia).
- Second most commonly reported are average teacher and/or

educator salaries (Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia).

- Six (6) states (Arkansas, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia) report expenditures by one or more service types.

- Six (6) states (Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Virginia) provide district funding by source (federal, state, local).

V. CONCLUSIONS

Several noteworthy generalizations about report cards/school profiles provided in the 19 states encompassed in the two studies can be made:

1. While the report cards/profiles differ markedly in contents and formats, there are also some commonalities in entries.

   For example, thirteen of the 16 states that include student performance data use state-specific tests as one measure. Most of the states report some form of socioeconomic data about students, families and the community. A great majority report expenditures in several categories. Several report both student body and staff composition by race and gender.

2. Procedures used in analyzing and presenting student outcome data appear to reflect both state policy and the particular interests of report card developers and/or citizens.

3. In a few eastern states (Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania) several categories of student and school characteristics correlate with the National Educational Goals. This may or may not be a conscious parallelism.

4. More eastern than southern state report cards contain "unique" contextual variables that may possibly impact student outcomes; e.g., hours students spend watching television, parental encouragement. However, there appears to have been no attempt to determine their impact statistically.

5. Only 58 percent of these states (11 of 19) provide building level as well as district level data and just 32 percent (6 of 19) contain grade level data.

6. Many of these states provide statewide averages and percentages for comparison with local data; several provide for comparison with like schools/districts, but there is no information provided that offers educators, parents and others insights into the factors that have actually contributed to higher or lower student performance levels in their own and other schools.

7. Several states are attempting to use factors other than test scores as indicators of student and school performance.

V. IMPLICATIONS

Several implications emerge from the findings and conclusions of this study.

Measurement of Student Performance. The majority of states in this study are using one or more state developed tests in their assessment package. This finding underscores again the related issues and questions; "Do these tests more accurately reflect the curriculum of schools across the state? Have the time and resources expended been well spent? Do these tests provide more valid and creditable information than is available in assessments produced for national use? As assessment reforms are undertaken, should states continue development on a state-by-state or consortium basis?

Report Card Development. As demonstrated again in this study, state report cards on schools tend to portray school districts and schools through a variety of student performance indicators and an array of student, school and community characteristics, but relationships between student outcomes and other reported factors are never examined. There is a tacit assumption that the factors presented are important variables in schooling and that they somehow impact student performance.

The Big Picture. This study adds to the information available about current school report cards. The investigators have studied intensively the contents and implications of report cards in two states (Tennessee, Arkansas), and they have provided comparative information about report card contents and practices in 19 Southern and Eastern states. Other investigators have conducted other studies. But it is now time to look at the big picture, to cull the best from what's been done in a variety of states, to conduct studies that attempt to identify conclusively what

variables impact student performance, and particularly those variables that educators have the power to modify. It is time to quit playing games with report cards. Let's either make them a useful tool in school improvement, reform, and restructuring or drop the effort and move on to activities that make a difference in the lives of learners.

APPENDIX A

VARIABLES FOUND IN ANALYSIS OF THE
REPORT CARDS OF ELEVEN SOUTHERN STATES

Tables contained herein have been taken from the paper titled "An Analysis of State Report Cards On School Produced In Eleven Southeastern States

Table 1. Instruments Used to Measure Student Performance In Southern States

STATE	INSTRUMENTS	COMMENTS
Arkansas	Minimum Performance Test, Grades 3, 6, 8	Percentage of 8th grade students passing and percentage of students passing all 12 tests at each grade level reported.
	Scholastic Aptitude Test 8, Grades 4, 7, 10	Percentages of students scoring at or below the 25th percentile, above the 50th percentile and above the 75th percentile are reported.
	American College Test (ACT)	Percentage of students taking the test is reported together with average score for the district.
		Percentage of seniors with composite ACT score of 19 or above is reported as "Scholarship ACT"
	Advanced Placement Examinations	Number of examinations taken per 1,000 students in grades 11-12 is reported.
Florida	Grade Ten Assessment Test (GTAT) (Reading Comprehension, Math)	Percentage of students below the 25th percentile and above the 75th percentile reported.
	American College Test (ACT)	Percentage of students (by gender and race) taking test and median score for school reported.
	Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	Percentage of students (by gender and race) taking test and median score for school reported.
	Average Number of Students Per Computer	Used as an indicator of readiness to use technology.
	Completion of Upper Level Science and Math Courses	Percentage of students (by gender and race) reported
Georgia	Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA), Grades 3, 5, 8 (Language Arts, Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health)	Matrix sampling procedure used; scores reported by percentage of students in each quartile.

	Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Grades 3, 5, 8 Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) Grade 11 (Reading, Math, Written Expression, Science, Social Studies)	Percentage of students in each quartile reported. Reported in grade equivalents. NOTE: All scores are reported in 19 school system groupings based on school district size and percentage of students on free/reduced lunch.
Kentucky	No student performance outcomes reported.	1991-92 profiles contain only 16 school/community factory "relating to quality." Results of statewide achievement testing program will be Part II of Profile in future years.
Louisiana	Criterion Referenced Test (CRT), elementary and middle/junior high. Graduate Exit Examination, (CRT for secondary schools). Norm Referenced Test (NRT) American College Test (ACT)	Percentage of students passing at the school level is reported. Percentage of students passing is reported. Percentage of students scoring at or above the national 50th percentile reported. Average composite score reported. NOTE: All scores are reported by school, school system, state and nation (where appropriate).
Mississippi	Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP), Grade 5 (Math, Reading, Written Communication, Composite) Functional Literacy Exam (FLE), Grade 11 (Reading, Math, Written Communication, Composite) Subject Area Testing Program (SATP), Algebra I Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), Grades 4, 6, 8	Reported as mean scaled scores for district and school Same procedure as BSAP Same procedure as BSAP and FLE Reported in terms of mean national normal curve equivalent for system and school.

North Carolina	California Achievement Test (CAT), Grades 3, 6, 8 (Reading/Language, Math)	Reported by percentage of students at each percentile in the district.
	N. Carolina Tests, Grades 3, 6, 8 (Writing, Social Studies, Science)	Reported for current year and past two years in percentiles
	NOTE: Writing test administered only at grades 6 and 8	
	North Carolina Tests, High School (Economics/Legal/ Politics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physical Science, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry)	Same reporting procedure as Grade 3, 6, 8 tests
	Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)	Average scores by district
	Advanced Placement Examinations	Number of students in district scoring 3 or above
	Percentage of students in Grades 9-12 earning 5 or more units toward graduation	
	Percentage of Graduates completing required UNC Admisions Courses	
South Carolina	Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP), all applicable grade levels (Mathematics, Reading, Science, Writing).	Percentage of students meeting State standard (700 scaled scores) for current year and preceding two years reported, and median scaled score for school with comparison group percentile rank and State percentile rank.
		NOTE: 5 comparison groups of schools are created based on contextual factors: % free lunch, % reduced lunch, median % at/above CSAB standard, median years of teacher education and school type (elementary, secondary)

	Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 8), Reading, Mathematics, Language)	Percentage of students at/below 25th percentile, above 50th percentile, and above 75th percentile reported.
	School Gain Index (SGI) and Exceeding Expectations Index (EEI)	SGI predicted for each school based on SGIs of all schools in comparison group. Difference between predicted SGI and actual SGI is the school's EEI. NOTE: SGI uses longitudinal analysis; comparison of some students across 2 or more years. NOTE: Outcomes are reported for school, school cluster, and State using means, medians and percentages.
Tennessee	Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP), Grades 2 thru 8 and 10 (Reading, Language, Math, Science, Social Studies)	Formerly reported as average percentile at each grade level; now reported in terms of average gain over two years and percentage of gain (plus or minus) against national norm.
	Tennessee Proficiency Test (TPT), Grade 9	Reported as percentage of students passing test (required score of 70 percent) NOTE: Scores reported at school system level until 1992-93. Grade and school level reports have since been instituted.
Virginia	Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), Grade 1 (Verbal, Quantitative, Nonverbal)	Reported in average scores' percentile equivalents.
	Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Grades 4, 8 (Reading, Language, Work-Study Skills, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies)	Reported in average scores' percentile equivalents.

	Tests of Achievement and Proficiencies, Grade 11 (Mathematics, Written Expression, Sources of Information, Science, Social Studies)	Reported in average scores' percentile equivalents. NOTE: Scores are reported at the school system level.
West Virginia	PSAT, Grades 10, 11	Percentage of Students taking test reported.
	American College Test (ACT)	Percentage of students taking test reported. Average composite score reported.
	Scholastic Apptitude Test (SAT)	Percentage of students taking test reported. Average verbal and quantitative scores reported.
	Advanced Placement Examinations, Grades 10, 11, 12	Number of students taking specific AP exams reported.
	Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, Grades 3, 6, 9, 11 (Language, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, Basic Skills, Spelling, Study Skills, (Grades 6, 9, 11 only), Word Analysis (Grade 3 only)	Reported as mean school percentile.

Table 2. Levels of Data Presented In State Report Cards In Southern States

State	Performance Data	School/District Characteristics
Arkansas	District Level Grade Level*	District Level
Florida	District Level School Level Grade Level*	District Level School Level
Georgia	District Level Grade Level*	District Level
Kentucky	Currently NA	Educational Development Region Level District Level
Louisiana	District Level School Level	District Level School Level
Mississippi	District Level School Level Grade Level*	District Level
North Carolina	District Level School Level	District Level
South Carolina	School Cluster (Comparison Group) Level School Level	District Level School Level
Tennessee	District Level School Level Grade Level	District Level
Virginia	District Level Grade Level*	District Level
West Virginia	District Level School Level	District Level School Level

*Grade level data provided for tests given only at specified levels.

Table 3: Student, School And Community Characteristics Identified In Southern States' Report Cards

State	Student Characteristics	School/District Characteristics	Community/District Financial Characteristics
Arkansas	•Percent free/ reduced lunch •Percent black, white	•Pupil/teacher ratio •Percent Black, White teachers •Percent students requiring at least one or more remedial courses as public college freshmen •Percent taking Alegebra I or higher, grades 9-12 •Percent taking biology, chemistry, physics or advanced science, grades 10-12 •Percent dropout, grades 7-12 (last five years) •Percent student attendance •Percent completion rate (% graduates who entered 9th grade) •Percent retention, grades K-8 •School system size •Area in district in square miles •Number of certified staff •Percent adults with 4 or more years of college	•Resource rate (computed from wealth of community and number of students) •Percent families above poverty level (1980 census) •Number of mills local taxation in effect •Per pupil expenditure •Average teacher salary •Board/ superintendent principal expense (sum of state funds reported as administrative expense) •Athletic expense (expenditure for athetics divided by ADM)

Florida	•Racial distribution (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indian) •Percent free/ reduced lunch •Percent gifted •Percent handicapped •Percent in federal compensatory programs •Percent limited English Proficient (by race) •Percent habitual truants	•Percent kindergarten retention •Percent first grade retention •Graduation rate •Student mobility (%) •Student attendance (%) •Percent students promoted, K-3 •Percent students promoted, 4-6 •Percent in school suspensions •Percent out of school suspensions •Percent corporal punishment •No full time teachers and staff •Racial/Ethnic composition of staff •Percent teachers by degree levels •Percent teachers by experience levels •Staffing ratios (pupils per teacher, pupils per administrator, pupils by librarian) •Instructional staff per administrator	•Per pupil expenditure •District funding by source (local, state, federal)
Georgia	•Percent free/ reduced lunch	•School system size	

Kentucky	•Percent free/ reduced lunch	•Percent instructional staff with Rank II certificates or higher (with percent deviation and actual deviation from state average) •Percent instructional staff below Rank III certification (with deviation and percent deviation from state average) •Percent graduates who entered the 9th grade (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Percent student attendance (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Pupil/teacher ratio (with deviation data) •Percent graduates entering college (with deviation data)	•Average annual teacher salaries (with percent deviation and actual deviation from state average) •Local financial index (local revenue per child divided by assessed value per child (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Cost per pupil of educational materials (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Cost per pupil for instruction (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Cost per pupil for administration (with deviation and % deviation from state average) •Percent local resources expended (with deviation data) •Percent State resources expended (with deviation data) •Percent Federal funds expended (with deviation data)
Louisiana		•End-of-year membership, regular education •End-of-year membership, special education	

		•Percent faculty with Masters degree or higher •Percent classes by grade and class size range: K-3: 1-12, 13-20, 21-26, 27 or more 4-12: 1-12, 13-20, 21-26, 27-33, 34 or more •Percent classes taught by teachers certified in that field •Percent student attendance •Percent dropouts by grade •Percent students suspended •Percent students expelled •Number of school faculty •Number of schools in district	
Mississippi	•Percent race (black, white) •Percent gender •Percent limited English proficient •Percent handicapped	•Average daily attendance	
North Carolina	•Number and percent race (American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, Black, White) •Percent gifted •Percent handicapped	•Membership (number of students) •Average number of students per teacher) Percent teachers with graduate degrees	•Local per pupil expenditures •Total per pupil expenditures •Average local teacher salary supplement

	•Percent in compensatory education programs •Percent free/ reduced lunch •Percent absent more than 14 days	•Number of high school completers •Number of vocational education completers •Number of NC scholars program course completers •Number of students taking AP exams •Number of students in grades 9-12 earning 5 or more units toward graduation •Number of graduates completing UNC required Admissions Courses	•Parent education level (percent 8th grade, 8-12, high school graduates, post high school)
South Carolina	•Percent free/ reduced lunch •Percent gender •Percent race •Percent Chapter I •Percent remedial/ compensatory	•Percent student attendance (with state percentile rank) •Percent teacher attendance (with state percentile rank) •Percent middle and secondary school dropouts (with percentile rank in state) •Median years of teacher education	
Tennessee	•Percent free/ reduced lunch •Percent in special education •Percent Chapter I students	•Number of schools •Average daily membership •Percent student attendance •Percent enrollment change •Percent oversized classes	•Average expenditure per pupil •County per capita income •Average professional educator salary

		•Percent elementary schools accredited by SACS •Percent educators on Career Ladder Levels II and III •Percent diplomas granted (regular, honors, special education, certificate of attendance) •Percent students in vocational education courses	
Virginia		•Size of district (ADM) on September 30 and end-of-year •Pupil/teacher ratios, K-7, 8-12, English 6-12, 1 •Pupil/instructional personnel ratio, K-6 •Number and percent students promoted •Percent 9th graders who graduated 4 years later •Number and percent graduates receiving standard diploma •Number and percent graduates receiving advanced studies diploma	•Receipts from State Sales and Use Tax, State funds, Federal funds, City/town/county funds, loans and bonds •Disbursements by service types (instruction, administration, attendance and health, operation and maintenance, food services summer school, adult education, other educational programs, facilities, debt service) •Per pupil expenditure from each funding source

		•Number and percent graduates receiving special diploma •Number and percent graduates receiving certificate •Number of total graduates •Number and percent of graduates attending 2 year, 4 year colleges and other continuing education •Number and percent dropouts by race and ethnicity (Am. Indian/Alaskan, Asian/Pacific Islands, Black, Hispanic, White) •Age/grade distribution of students (under 5 yrs. to 20 or over, K to post-graduate) •Average daily attendance and percent attendance •Number of days taught in school year •Total number of instructional personnel and number per 1000 students	•Index of local ability to pay costs of the Standards of Quality (computed from true value of property, adjusted gross income, taxable retail sales, ADM and total population) •Average annual salaries for elementary and secondary principals, assistant principals and teachers

		•Number (full-time equivalents) of administrative service and support personnel (superintendent and asst. superintendents, instructional support, clerical/technical, teacher aides, facilities, attendance and health, pupil transportation, operation and principals, Other)	
West Virginia		•Grade range in each school •School enrollments •Number of split grade classes •Average class size •Percent attendance •Percent transfers in •Percent students promoted •Number of graduates •Percent dropouts •Percent students in grades 9 and 11 in College Prep program, Tech Prep Program, Vocational program, Other •Enrollment by subject in foreign language, English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies •Pupil/teacher ratio •Pupil/administrator ratio	

		●Teacher and administrator levels of education (numbers with Bachelor, Bachelor + 15, Masters, Masters + 15, Masters + 30, Masters + 45, Ph.D., Other) ●Percent students taking PSAT, grades 10, 11 ●Percent students taking ACT and/or SAT ●Number of students taking AP exams, grades 10-12	