School Accountability Reports:
A Five-Year Review of Progress
(2000-2005)

A statutory requirement of the

Colorado State Board of Education

February 2005

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COLORADO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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MISSION

The mission of the Colorado State Board of Education is to provide all of Colorado's children equal access to quality, thorough, uniform, well-rounded educational opportunities in a safe and civil learning environment.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Accountability Report original legislation, S.B. 00-186, directed the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to develop a state reporting system to compile objective indicators of every public school's academic performance. It also called for the reports to be made readily accessible to parents and taxpayers in order to help them make informed choices that will enable all children to have an opportunity for a quality education. The purpose was to enhance the ability of the General Assembly and the State Board of Education to monitor the progress of our schools, and it allowed for the measurement of a thorough and uniform system of education throughout our state.

The statute also specified that during February 2005, the State Board of Education shall report to the education committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives on all aspects of the school accountability reports, according to §22-7-606 (5)(a), Colorado Revised Statutes .

The report is to include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Whether the scores of students have improved since the accountability reports were issued.
- Data on safety incidents involving students.
- Whether the format of the School Accountability Reports could be improved.
- Whether the State Board or Department has been informed of problems with the School Accountability Reports.
- Whether the State Board recommends that the School Accountability Reports be continued.

The legislation regarding the SARs is probably the *most* prescriptive law the State Board and the Department has to administer. Due to this, this Board has very little leeway in adjusting format, content, or placement to better adhere to our target audience. With added flexibility to enhance this report based both on the external comments the Board receives regularly in the course of our duties and from the Department's identification of idiosyncrasies in the system, the effectiveness of this report could be improved.

The State Board of Education herein recommends the statute be changed to allow for the added flexibility this board needs to manage the quality and productivity of the report.

Colorado's CSAP gains since the first SAR in 2001, show steady but slow progress. (See Appendix A for details.) The more remarkable gains are in the sheer number of schools that have been able to move up in the ratings from 2001 to 2004. (Note the table on page 21.) The incidents involving students' safety also show nearly a 6% decline since 2001. (Note the table in Appendix B.)

"Just as report cards for students tend to grab the attention of parents, report cards for schools have an audience that is ready to listen.

Accountability reports provide education leaders with a magic moment to communicate with their community. The challenge is to take advantage of the moment."

A-Plus Communications; Reporting Results, What the Public Wants to Know; Education Week's Quality Counts 99

GENERAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I.   Issue: Flexibility is needed for this Board to manage the quality and productivity of the SAR

Rationale: With the trust of the Legislature, we can shape this report into a more readable and informative report, with a better layout than we have currently. Due to the fact that the statute has been changed annually, in almost a piecemeal approach, the design has been hindered over the years. Additionally, the prescriptive nature of the statute requiring the SAR, including the exact wording on the SARs, the fold and size of the paper, and placement and font size, the State Board and the department have very little flexibility to make this report the best it can be for all publics. For example, we see the need to rearrange some of the data provided in certain sections and reduce the number of questions on the questions panel to make room for more opening statements that would put the key data remaining in context for the parent.

II.   Issue: Less is More – The data needs to be presented in a more readable format

Rationale: In numerous studies nationwide of school report cards, it is often very hard to determine the primary audience or the desired information of that audience. Educators and policymakers often want and provide different information than what parents may desire.

Recommendation: In order to create a meaningful yet readable report that is concise, clear, and credible, it requires a great deal of focus and communication planning. That planning includes talking to the various publics we are trying to serve with the SAR. The State Board has begun these discussions with various publics and will continue to hold these discussions. If the Legislature will allow the State Board to work with a graphic designer and other communication professionals and present mock-ups of user-friendly versions of this report to perhaps an Interim Committee at a later date, we would be delighted to do so.

III.   Issue: Colorado's three measures of holding schools accountable can be better communicated and reported to parents

Explanation: Colorado's accountability measures, named in the order of appearance in state or federal law, are Accreditation, School Accountability Reports, and No Child Left Behind. Each uses the CSAP to determine results, but each answers a significantly different question in the measurement of progress of student achievement.   Accreditation is by far the most all-encompassing, asking the question, "Are the school and district providing a well-rounded educational experience for Colorado's students?" The School Accountability Report shows the academic performance indicated by the subjects assessed by CSAP, so it asks the question, "Is the school succeeding in teaching those academic subjects?" The federal No Child Left Behind Act, with its emphasis on measuring the progress of Adequate Yearly Progress of the sub-groups in our school population, asks, "Is the school and district closing its achievement gap?"

Recommendation: All three have laudable goals, but all use different measures of progress. There needs to be a collective effort to address, not necessarily an alignment problem, but a communication problem. In doing so, it is important that it be made abundantly clear that Colorado's three accountability measures answer different questions but all point to improving overall student achievement. The State Board therefore recommends language to briefly explain the three measures on the SAR. This could be done effectively in layman's language on the inside panel if the questions panel was limited in scope.

GENERAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

IV. Issue: Clarify the use of the new academic growth rating for students

Explanation: H.B. 04-1433 created a new growth rating of the same student over multiple years of time. This replaced the measurement of different students of the same grade level measured over time. Without changing the name of the performance level, parents may confuse the two measurements.

Recommendation: A brief description of the goals of the growth rating should be included, especially to differentiate it from the previous improvement rating. Change to new labels so there is no confusion with the old improvement rating. The old ratings were: significant improvement, improvement, stable, decline and significant decline.

The State Board, as well as parents and other policymakers alike, value this added growth rating to determine how individual students are progressing from year to year. The State Board would like to explore the possibility of using this rating in holding schools accountable, which better explains the progress made rather than a snapshot rating of one year's academic performance.

V. Issue: Review and clean up statutory language on John Irwin Award Program

Explanation: We began with the top eight percent of the Excellent Schools receiving John Irwin awards. The State Board now questions whether or not the intent is to stay within the same bell curve percentages, or is the intent to award all schools with an Excellent rating the distinction, which equates to 200 schools in 2004.

Recommendation: The State Board recommends clean-up legislation to identify the award ranges or to allow the State Board of Education to determine them in rule.

VI. Issue: Parents like the information on the SAR, but don't feel empowered to act

Explanation: Parents in various focus groups liked receiving the information on the SARs, but often do not know what to do with it next. They are not aware of the multiple uses of this tool to generate choice opportunities for their children's education. Some of the information regarding the district, as opposed to the school, was also too far removed. Other information, such as the student-teacher ratio and the "Unreportable" adequate yearly progress information were complicating with very little explanation as to how these were calculated.

Recommendations: The Questions Panel created in H.B. 04-1217 was designed to empower the parents to ask questions of the school, but this panel alone is not significant enough to empower parents. As previously mentioned, it is important to always set the data in context for the reader. Introductory statements explaining the data need to become the norm, not the exception, to clarify what we want our audience to know and retain.

GENERAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

VII.   Issue: Split schools require multiple SARs

Explanation: Schools, such as K-8 schools, including both elementary and middle school levels, now receive two report cards for the one school. This creates the same effect of two small schools, and the question of where to appropriately split the school. It also creates, in many cases, such small populations that there can be large sways in the year-to-year rating.

Recommendation: The State Board recommends issuing one report for one school. However, within the current format, it is impossible to show the eight or nine different pie charts for each content area for a multi-level school. If this recommendation is accepted, the State Board would need the authority to address the formatting issues to create one report.

VIII.   Issue: Use the Internet in a better way as an interactive communication tool with the SARs

Explanation: It is now cumbersome for a user to check the ratings of all schools in a district. Additionally, the Web versions of the SARs are difficult to read due to the size.

Recommendation: The State Board will direct the Department to make ratings easier to determine and to resize the documents so parents can easily read the information. The Board also recommends placing the individual school website link on the SAR, if that site is available, so parents may link directly to the school site for further information. The Board also recommends including statements such as the following on enrollment, "Residing in the neighborhood of a school does not guarantee enrollment. Additionally, Colorado is an open enrollment state and a student may attend a school in another school district, depending on space availability. Check with individual schools about enrollment opportunities."

IX.   Issue: Re-baselining weighted total scores to performance grades

Explanation: The statute requires the State Board of Education in February 2005 and in February every three years thereafter to report to the Legislature on whether a new year should be used as a baseline year to recalculate the overall standardized, weighted total scores assigned to each performance grade.

Recommendation: At this point in time, the State Board is not recommending to re-baseline the performance grades. Every time we add new assessments, like we will in the 2005-2006 school year, we are essentially required to re-baseline the performance grades. Additionally, the State Board does not feel that it makes sense at this point to keep changing the bar of measurement. In February 2008, the State Board will report whether or not its opinion on this matter has changed.

DESIGN AND CONTENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The State Board of Education and the Colorado Department of Education solicited feedback from various education associations, administrators and parents, and reviewed other states' report cards in obtaining this feedback to the education committees of the General Assembly required by § 22-7-606 (5)(a), C.R.S.

Additionally, the State Board could have made many of these changes and prevented some of these concerns had we been provided the flexibility in statute to change the placement of certain content, provide clarifying statements to put the data in context, or to design the report in a more readable fashion.

It is through these inclusive discussions and our experience on holding schools accountable for the success of all children that we offer the following recommendations for improvement:

Front Panel

I.   **Recommendation: Change "Overall Academic Performance" to "Overall Academic Performance on State Assessments"**

Rationale: This tells parents exactly how the school's ranking is determined. Obviously, the controversial nature of ranking schools is where the State Board hears the most complaints about the SAR. Therefore, we should be up front about where the ranking comes from, and state that the rating is based on state assessments.

II.   **Recommendation: Change How School Compares to "Nearby Schools" to "Schools within a 75-mile Radius"**

Rationale: The State Board of Education has received complaints about this information on the SAR. Some complaints stem from the comparison of unlike schools on the list, and more comments deal with the fact that 75 miles is not considered "nearby." The State Board recommends changing the title of this chart to "Schools within a 75-mile Radius". The State Board values this section of comparing schools in order to give parents the tools to exercise choice.

DESIGN AND CONTENT RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

III. Recommendation: Include Adequate Yearly Progress, but change the display

Rationale: Due to privacy issues, the federal measurement, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), cannot be determined if the sub-groups assessed are less than 30 students. Therefore, at the school level, very few sub-groups can actually be displayed. The State Board recognizes that closing the achievement gap and AYP is of interest to schools and parents, but when most of the information on the SAR table is stated as "Unreportable," it begs the question of why include it.

The State Board recommends asking specific questions, such as whether or not the school made AYP, what percent of targets were met, and if the school is on school improvement. A footnote or an introductory paragraph would be needed to explain what AYP measures, which sub-groups are targeted, and what it means to be on school improvement. (See the following page for an example of this recommendation.)

Student Performance Panel

IV.   Recommendation: Move the ACT information from the pie chart area and replace with added Science tests

Rationale: We will have science tests in 5th and 10th grades in the 2005-2006 school year, and they should be shown just as math and reading are with the breakdown of proficiency level. Since the ACT cannot be graphed in a pie chart, it would be better to list the results of the test below in a table format.

Questions Parents Should Ask Panel

V.   Recommendation: Limit the number of questions

Rationale: The State Board values the questions on the panel, because an accountability system is designed to give parents the tools to challenge authority where needed. The questions are a little technical in areas, and the Board requests the authority to limit the questions to provide additional space to explain the differences between the three accountability systems.

"In particular, some of the Hispanic parents in our district felt uncomfortable with the tone of the questions. The questions seemed to challenge authority in a negative way, and they suggested writing more positive questions on what is working in the school."

Communications Specialist of Aurora Public Schools

SAMPLE

ACADEMY EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ACADEMY 20

School Accountability Report
2003-2004 School Year

School Performance Summary

Overall Academic Growth	Excellent
Academic Growth of Students	A Year's Learning

How Academy Edison Elementary School Compares To Schools within a 75-mile radius.

School	Academic Performance
Frontier Elementary School	High
Academy International Elementary School	Excellent
Explorer Elementary School	Excellent
High Plains Elementary School	Excellent
Pioneer Elementary School	High
Prairie Hills Elementary School	High
The Classical Academy Charter	Excellent
Mountain View Elementary School	Excellent
Martinez Elementary School(1)	High
King Elementary School(1)	High

1 Located in Colorado Springs 11 School District.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires states to track whether schools are making "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) toward the goal of ensuring that all students know and are able to do grade-level work in reading and mathematics.

Did your school make AYP in reading?[1] No
Did your school make AYP in math?[1] No
[1]How many targets does your school have? [ ] How many were met? [ ]
Is your school required to offer students free transportation to a higher performing school?[2] Yes
Does your school need to offer free tutoring services?[2] Yes

[1]Adequate Yearly Progress is met when all sub-groups including 30 or more students by ethnicity, economic status, disabilities, and limited English proficiency meet 100% of academic targets on CSAP set by federal law.
[2]School Improvement is a three-year plan of action to raise academic achievement in the school with the goal of making Adequate Yearly Progress, including the ability to receive free supplemental tutoring services.

Design and Content Recommendations (continued)

About Our Staff Panel

VI.   Recommendation: Simplify Students per Teacher Ratio

Rationale: The Students per Teacher Ratio has led to probably the most confusion of any data on the SAR. Parents know that there are any-where between 25-35 kids in the classroom, yet the student-teacher ratio on the SAR is closer to 15. In order to clarify and simplify this information, the State Board recommends adding a column for classroom teacher ratio and an introductory statement or footnote to explain who is included in the teacher category besides the classroom teacher.

VII.   Recommendation: Include information on Highly Qualified Teachers

Rationale: In an attempt to harmonize the three accountability measures, the Board recommends consolidating and adding information collected on the qualification of our teachers. The Board recommends replacing "Percent of teachers teaching in the subject in which they received their degree(s)," with "Percent of Teachers Considered Highly Qualified." Of course, this would need an explanation that "Highly Qualified" means a licensed teacher teaching in an area with which he or she is endorsed, and/or has received 24 hours of instruction, or passed a test in the content area.

VIII.   Recommendation: Remove the tenure information from the Professional Experience Table

Rationale: Colorado does not have a formal tenure system in statute. This information is misleading and should be removed altogether.

IX.   Recommendation: Have school contact information and web reference only on back panel

Rationale: Now the name of the school and contact information are in several locations on the report, and space on this report is very limited. Therefore, the State Board recommends that the contact information of the school and its website should be more prominently located only on the back panel of the SAR.

Design and Content Recommendations (continued)

Safety and School Environment Panel

The Safety and School Environment Panel is what the parents seem to be most interested in per focus groups in Colorado and around the country. Ironically, it is also the least objective information on the SAR. All of the data on this page is determined by local board policy and is self-reported. Each data point, such as determining whether an incident is an "assault" or a "fight" or is just a scuffle in the hallway naturally must be determined at the local level. Having said this, the State Board values this section and has the following recommendations for improving it:

X.   Recommendation: Rework Safety & Discipline Chart

Rationale: The State Board recommends removing the columns "Referred to Law Enforcement" and "Other" under the Action Taken title, because the chart should focus on all incidents which result in suspension or expulsion only. Also, the row titled, "Habitually Disruptive" means that a student has already received two suspensions and one expulsion, and the data would need to show the number of students, not incidents, and therefore needs to be separated from the table.

XI.   Recommendation: Change the title of "Student Attendance and Time Spent in the Classroom" to "Student Attendance and School Calendar".

Rationale: The State Board collects the number of days school is in session and an average attendance rate, not necessarily the number of hours in a classroom.

XII.   Recommendation: Delete "Students per Total Staff" row

Rationale: Total staff is presented on the previous panel. It does not belong under the title "Student Attendance and Time Spent in the Classroom" Section.

XIII. Recommendation: Include both Dropout Rate and Graduation Rate for High Schools

Rationale: The calculations of dropouts and graduation rate are different and should both be on the SAR on the Safety and Environment Panel to tell the complete story. A brief footnote or introductory statement denoting the difference would prove to be helpful. It is important to give the school year information with this information as well, as the information is a year in arrears.

SAFETY AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Safe and Orderly School Features

Your School	does	does not
allows after-school visits	☒	☐
requires student uniforms	☒	☐
encourages community programs in school building	☒	☐
conducts home visits	☐	☒
has a closed campus	☒	☐
requires parental conferences	☐	☒

Safety and Discipline

Safe school's are a top priority for parents, teachers, and communities.
Your schools safety and discipline record for the 2003-2004 school year is:

Type of Incident	Number of incidents reported	Action Taken		
		In School Suspension	Out of School Suspension	Expulsion
Substance Abuse - Drugs				
Substance Abuse - Alcohol				
Substance Abuse - Tobacco				
Assaults/Fights	31	5	26	
Dangerous Weapons	1		1	
Other Violations Code of Conduct	8	4	4	

Number of Habitually Disruptive Students: 5

Student Attendance and School Calendar

2003-2004	Your School
Length of School Year	186 days
Enrollment	613
Average Daily Attendance	586
Student Dropouts	0.0%
Annual Number of Teacher Days Scheduled without Student Contact	0
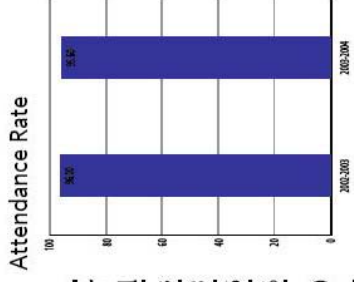
Attendance Rate

Student Information over Time

	2002-2003	2003-2004
Student Average Daily Attendance	96.1%	96.0%
Student Dropouts	N/A	N/A
Safety and Discipline Total Incidents Reported	94	37
Student Enrollment Stability	96.2%	95.6%
Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch	19	18

Design and Content Recommendations (continued)

XIV. Recommendation: Change "Students Eligible for Free Lunch" with "Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch" and replace the numbers of students with percentages

Rationale: The data collected from school districts is on "Free and Reduced Lunch." The percentage of the students qualifying would be more helpful for the general reader than a raw number.

XV. Recommendation: Move the rating key of the academic and improvement ratings

Rationale: The rating key needs to be closer to the actual rating in order to be useful to the reader.

Taxpayers' Report Panel

XVI. Recommendation: Identify clearly that this panel is district-level information

Rationale: This is the only panel with only district-level information. It would be important to clarify that in the title of the panel.

XVII. Recommendation: Change the fiscal information presented

Rationale: The data on this panel is misleading and did not correspond to the district financial systems. This made it difficult for district business offices to answer questions about the data from taxpayers. Feedback was presented by the Financial Policies and Procedures Committee (a committee of school district business officials created in statute) for this newly-designed panel. The changes provide consistent terminology and clarification of terms for the reader.

XVIII. Recommendations: Add the District's Accreditation status on this panel

Rationale: Since the SAR has incorporated two of our three accountability systems, the State Board felt it important to include information on our most encompassing system, Accreditation. The Board recommends adding a bold section on "Accreditation Status for School Year." It would be important to clarify this with an opening statement of what accreditation means, indicating that the state accredits school districts and the school districts, in turn, accredit individual schools.
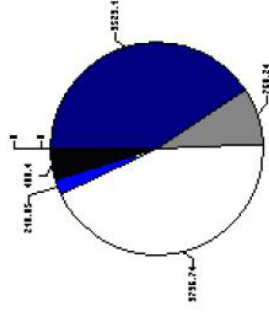
SAMPLE

TAXPAYERS' REPORT

Accreditation is the state's most all-encompassing accountability system, measuring eleven different indicators including academic areas both tested and not tested by CSAP, school safety, and budget compliance. The state accredits districts, and districts, in turn, accredit individual schools.

Accreditation Status for the 2003-2004 School Year: **Accredited**

ACADEMY 20

District Source of Funds

Sources of School District Revenue per pupil	FY 03-04	State Average
Local Tax Contribution (Property Tax-School Finance-Bond-Transportation-Overrides)	$3,523	$3,472
Other Local Sources (State's Share of School Finance Funding)	$760	$963
State Equalization (State's Share of School Finance Funding)	$3,797	$3,461
Other State Sources/Grants	$210	$323
Federal Grants	$400	$571
Other Revenue Sources (Capital Leases-Special and Extraordinary Items)	$0	$225
Bond/Certificates of Participation Proceeds (Proceeds from Long Term Debt)	$0	$1,345
Total FY03 District Revenue Per Pupil	$8,691	$10,360

Number of Full-Time Equivalent(FTE) Pupils 17,813.5

District Uses of Funds

District Use of Funds	FY 03-04	State Average
Instructional (Classroom Instruction-Cocurricular Activities)	$4,639	$4,520
Instructional Support (Guidance-Health-Staff Development-Curriculum-Media)	$543	$727
General Administration (Board of Education – Superintendent Office)	$68	$112
School Administration (Principal's Office)	$620	$532
Business/Central/Other District Business Office-Risk Management-Information Services)	$664	$775
Non Instructional Services (Operations & Maintenance-Student Transportation-Food Service-Enterprise Operation-Community Service-Adult Education)	$1,158	$1351
Facility/Construction Services	$1086	$959
Debt Service (Payment of Long Term Debt)	$1,304	$921
Total FY03 District Use of Funds	$10,082	$9,897

Voter Approved Funding Changes

Mill Levy Override Approved	$12,750,862
Mill Levy Override Collected	$10,240,595
Date of Last Bond Election	2001
Date of TABOR Override Approval	2002

For more information and further details about this report, visit www.state.co.us/schools
Colorado Department of Education. 201 East Colfax Ave. Denver, CO 80203

ACADEMY EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
1040/0017
3475 Hampton Park Drive . Colorado Springs, CO 80920 . 719-264-1501

Historical Perspective of Legislation Affecting the SAR

After Colorado put in place high standards to define what Coloradans wanted our children to know and be able to do ten years ago, we moved to develop rigorous assessments to determine what proportion of our students met those standards. The CSAP also gave us a road map to illuminate those areas where greater effort was needed on behalf of children. The final major element of our reform program was accountability.

The School Accountability Report began as an initiative of Governor Owens and the General Assembly in the 2000 legislative session. With the passage of SB00-186, Colorado's current accountability systems took new life.

Each year saw some clean-up legislation to correct omissions and strengthen this accountability system.

2000 – Summary of the Major Components of SB00-186

- This initial legislation required CDE to establish and contract out the development of a state data reporting system to produce school report cards in 2001.
- Specified the calculation of school academic performance grades and designations of school improvement.
- Set 2001 as the baseline year, where a standard normal distribution was used to rate schools. For example, the top 8% received the highest rating, and the lowest 2% received a failing rating.
- Established the specific, rigid format of the school report cards, including academic performance and improvement grades, safety and school environment, staff information, school history, and tax-payer's report.
- Authorized the local board to submit a school improvement plan and specified when a failing school would be converted to an independent charter school.
- Required CDE to deliver the school report cards to parents and be placed on the website by August 15, 2001, and every August 15 thereafter.

2001 – Summary of the Legislative Changes – First Year of the SAR

- Changed "School Report Card" to "School Accountability Report."
- Changed school performance grades to school ratings of "Excellent," "High," "Average," "Low," and "Unsatisfactory."
- Changed the School Improvement Grades to Ratings of "Significant Improvement," "Improvement," "Stable," "Decline" and "Significant Decline" to be included on the 2002 SAR.
- Delayed until the 2001-02 school year the requirement of the ACT exam to be used in the calculation of the school performance rating.
- Permitted a school district, at its own expense, to include supplemental information with the SAR to go to parents as long as it did not refute the SAR.
- Required the reporting of substance abuse incidents segregated by drugs, alcohol and tobacco.
- Clarified that an Unsatisfactory school under a school improvement plan had two years prior to required conversion to an independent charter school.
- Authorized the exemption of a school performance rating if more than 95% of the students at the school have individual educational programs.
- Extended the date for CDE to deliver the SARs from August 15 to September 15.

2002 – Summary of the Legislative Changes Made – Second Year of the SAR

- Exempted alternative education campuses from receipt of academic performance and improvement ratings, unless the State Board of Education approves the rating.
- Specified that English Language Learners who take the English CSAP assessment shall not be included in the school academic performance or improvement ratings, until the student is enrolled in a public school in Colorado for three years or receives a proficient score on the CSAP.
- Expanded the CSAP assessments to 3rd and 4th grade mathematics and 5th and 10th grade science. In 2001, 18 CSAP assessments were used, and in 2002, 26 CSAP assessments determined the rating, along with the ACT. This was a 53% increase in CSAP exams to be scored.
- Exempted scores of students who transferred into the school after October 1.
- Delayed the release date until November 15, and required CDE to update its website to include each SAR each year upon completion.

2003 – Summary of the Legislative Changes Made – Third Year of the SAR

- Repealed the School Improvement Grant Program.
- Added a Closing the Achievement Gap Program for those schools with an "Unsatisfactory" rating and required the State Board of Education to identify those schools with a significant achievement gap.
- Delayed the release date until January 15, 2004 and by January 15 each year thereafter, and aligned the conversion of independent charter schools deadlines.
- Extended the date for CDE to deliver the SARs from August 15 to September 15.

2004 – Summary of the Legislative Changes Made – Fourth Year of the SAR

- Extended the definition of alternative education campuses, which exempted from the SAR rating a school with more than 95% of the students defined as high-risk.
- Added to the SAR a chart reflecting whether subgroups of students are making adequate yearly progress toward grade-level performance in reading and mathematics, as determined by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.
- Replaced the page on school history with a page containing questions for parents to ask the school based upon the school's academic performance.
- Authorized the addition of the school's website on the SAR.
- Repealed the existing school improvement measurement and added the academic growth of the same students over time, determined by a growth model in statute. By the 2003-04 school year, required CDE to annually assign a rating for the academic growth of students, based on the proportion of students who make gains in CSAP. The ratings were set as: "Significant Improvement", "Improvement", "Stable", "Decline" and "Significant Decline".

TRENDS (2001-2004)

Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)

The CSAP is the longest-standing, standards-based accountability assessment program in the United States and is often praised as a model assessment program nationwide. Initiated in 1997 with two tests, the CSAP has grown to include 27 tests in 2004. With every new test, a one-time alignment was necessary to allow for valid comparisons of CSAP results over time. The CSAP was designed by Colorado teachers and an assessment company contracted by the state. The CSAP was designed to serve as a summative assessment to help schools, students, parents, and leaders learn how our students are progressing, what they know and are able to do, and whether or not they are meeting grade level expectations set by Colorado's Model Content Standards.

The CSAP is now the basis for Colorado's accountability measures – Accreditation, School Accountability Reports, and No Child Left Behind. For example, CSAP is used in (1) determining the school's rating on the School Accountability Report; (2) determining the disaggregated results of groups of students necessitated by No Child Left Behind; (3) considering several indicators, but certainly not all indicators of Accreditation; (4) measuring longitudinal growth of students' or schools' annual progress; and (5) other ways by individual school districts to hold students and staff accountable.

Since the inception of SAR, CSAP scores have improved in most tested areas and for all population groups. While steady, however, progress has been painfully slow.

For a detailed list of CSAP scores since 2001, please see Appendix A.

2004 CSAP Highlights

- Significant gains were made for Math grades 5, 6 and 8, small gains for grade 9, and there was no decline in any grade in Math overall.
- The one and only 8th grade Science test has shown a 2 point increase in performance and steady rise over time. In 2006, the 5th and 10th grade science tests will be added.
- Reading scores, while up in 5th grade, for both genders and all ethnicities, are stable in all other grades.
- Writing scores show stable or modest gains, with the exception of the 3rd grade which had a decline.
- The CSAP Spanish version showed a strong increase in reading, 6% for females and 4% for males.
- Asian and Pacific Islanders have shown trends of persistent gain over the past three years in Reading and Writing.
- Gains at fifth grade reading, 9th grade writing, and 5th and 6th grade math were mirrored equally by students in Title I and IEP programs.

School Accountability Reports (SARs)

When we issued the first School Accountability Report in 2001, a significant number of schools were deemed to be Unsatisfactory. Yet, since that time more than half of those schools have moved out of this category by either improving student achievement or by becoming exempted from the SAR rating. Additionally, there are 175 more schools that have moved into either the high or excellent categories since 2001. Twenty two of the original 30 schools rated Unsatisfactory are now rated Low. One of the original Unsatisfactory schools has moved into the Average rating. The balance have either stayed Unsatisfactory, have been closed or are exempted from ratings.

The following table shows the ratings Colorado schools have earned since the beginning of the SARs in 2001:

Table 1—School Accountability Report Ratings

Ratings	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004[*]
Excellent	129	119	187	200
High	403	451	507	507
Average	631	665	634	679
Low	398	421	394	358
Unsatisfactory	30	49	32	13
No Rating	154[**]	16	21	85

* 2003-2004 data includes alternative schools as defined by S.B. 04-83
** This figure included programs, not schools, that were later incorporated into other SARs

Safety and Discipline Indicators

One of the requirements of this report is to show data reporting safety incidents involving students. Nearly every focus group, locally and nationally, show that safety information is one of the most valued sections on school accountability reports. The State Board takes the collection of safety statistics very seriously and works closely with the school districts to ensure clear communication and definition of terms related to safety.

All of the data reported on safety and discipline indicators is determined by local board policy and is self-reported data. Each data point, such as determining whether an incident is an "assault" or a "fight" or is just a scuffle in the hallway naturally must be determined at the local level. A caveat must therefore be made with the presentation of annual trend data. The subjectivity of this data is always a concern for policymakers and parents, however the State Board feels that the data has become more reliable over time, due to the efforts made to more clearly defining incidents and providing clearer direction to the districts.

The most recent data indicates that the 2002-2003 school year had a suspension rate of 15.6 percent. This was a 1.2 percentage point decrease from the 2001-2002 school year (16.8 percent) and a 0.7 percentage point decrease from 2000-2001 school year (16.3 percent). The 2002-2003 school year had an expulsion rate of 0.3 percent. This was equal to the 2001-2002 school year and 2000-2001 school year.

A table showing the type and number of specific incidents that occurred in all schools from 2001-2004 and the action taken is available in Appendix B.

"Parents, taxpayers and educators alike said safety is the top issue, but they differ on how to measure it."

A-Plus Communications; Reporting Results, What the Public Wants to Know; Education Week's Quality Counts 99

CONCLUSION

The School Accountability Report statutory language is one of the most prescriptive pieces of legislation that the State Board must administer, down to the fold of the paper and the font on the page. The State Board appreciates the fact that this is the most visible accountability system in our state and this Board has committed to seeing it be a successful tool for parents and policymakers alike.

The State Board unanimously feels that added flexibility and less micromanagement of this process would produce a more user-friendly report. We can refine it on an as needed basis when we receive feedback from the audiences we serve to improve the effectiveness. The Board also understands the need for consistency with a report of this nature, so that parents learn to feel comfortable with consistent information, laid out in a familiar format. The Board recommends making changes gradually over time and not major overhauls on an annual basis.

The final statutory requirement of this report is whether the State Board recommends that the School Accountability Reports be continued. Allowing for the noted recommendations in this report, the State Board of Education recommends the SAR be continued.
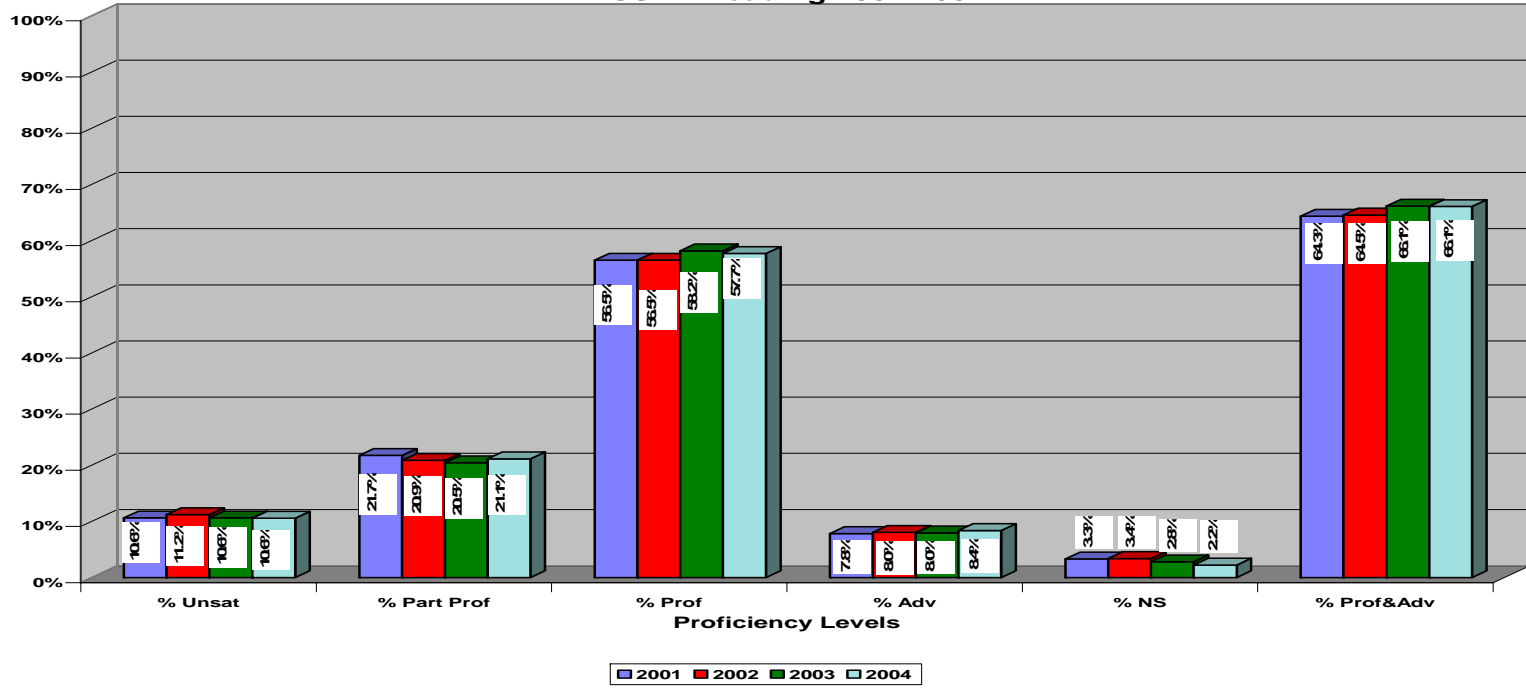
"It appears that the essential ingredients for a report card to be well received are: how students are performing, what they are doing, whether they are safe and how the money is being spent."

A-Plus Communications; Reporting Results, What the Public Wants to Know; Education Week's Quality Counts 99

APPENDIX A — CSAP TRENDS 2001-2004

Academic Year	Subject Name	Prof&Adv	% Unsat	% Part Prof	% Prof	% Adv	% NS	% Prof&Adv
2001	READING	283447	10.6%	21.7%	56.5%	7.8%	3.3%	64.3%
2002	READING	287706	11.2%	20.9%	56.5%	8.0%	3.4%	64.5%
2003	READING	297863	10.6%	20.5%	58.2%	8.0%	2.8%	66.1%
2004	READING	295241	10.6%	21.1%	57.7%	8.4%	2.2%	66.1%
2001	WRITING	80256	5.6%	39.4%	42.5%	7.3%	5.1%	49.8%
2002	WRITING	224575	6.2%	40.1%	42.2%	8.0%	3.5%	50.2%
2003	WRITING	236668	6.0%	38.7%	43.0%	9.5%	2.8%	52.5%
2004	WRITING	235082	5.8%	39.3%	43.3%	9.3%	2.3%	52.6%
2001	MATH	63887	24.7%	32.4%	27.6%	11.9%	3.6%	39.4%
2002	MATH	136266	23.3%	32.2%	28.4%	12.2%	3.8%	40.7%
2003	MATH	139717	23.9%	32.0%	28.1%	12.8%	3.2%	40.9%
2004	MATH	143797	24.2%	31.1%	28.1%	14.2%	2.4%	42.3%
2001	SCIENCE	26583	18.3%	29.4%	42.7%	6.0%	3.6%	48.7%
2002	SCIENCE	27617	19.4%	26.9%	42.8%	7.0%	3.9%	49.8%
2003	SCIENCE	27661	20.6%	27.4%	41.5%	7.5%	3.0%	49.0%
2004	SCIENCE	29149	20.6%	26.4%	43.2%	7.7%	2.1%	50.9%

CSAP Reading 2001-2004

	% Unsat	% Part Prof	% Prof	% Adv	% NS	% Prof&Adv
2001	10.6%	21.7%	56.5%	7.8%	3.3%	64.3%
2002	11.2%	20.9%	56.3%	8.0%	3.4%	64.3%
2003	10.8%	20.5%	58.2%	8.0%	2.8%	66.1%
2004	10.6%	21.1%	57.7%	8.4%	2.2%	66.1%

Proficiency Levels

■ 2001 ■ 2002 ■ 2003 □ 2004

Writing Proficiency 2001-2004

	% Unsat	% Part Prof	% Prof	% Adv	% NS	% Prof&Adv
2001	5.6%	39.4%	42.5%	7.3%	5.1%	49.8%
2002	6.2%	40.1%	42.2%	8.0%	3.5%	50.2%
2003	6.0%	38.7%	43.0%	9.5%	2.8%	52.5%
2004	5.8%	39.3%	43.3%	9.3%	2.3%	52.6%
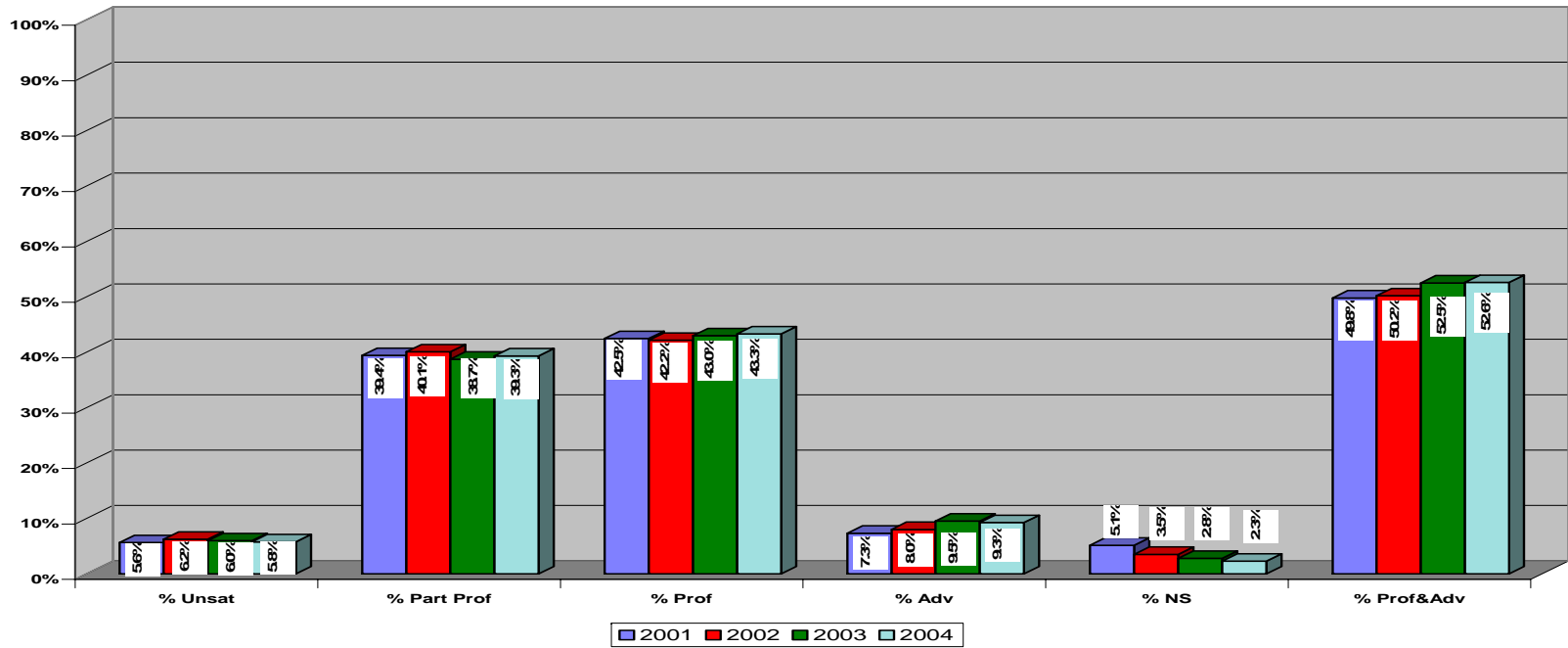
■ 2001 ■ 2002 ■ 2003 □ 2004

CSAP Math Proficiency 2001-2004

	% Unsat	% Part Prof	% Prof	% Adv	% NS	% Prof&Adv
2001	24.7%	32.4%	27.6%	11.9%	3.6%	39.4%
2002	23.3%	32.2%	28.4%	12.2%	3.8%	40.7%
2003	23.9%	32.0%	28.1%	12.8%	3.2%	40.9%
2004	24.2%	31.1%	28.1%	14.2%	2.4%	42.3%

Legend: ■ 2001 ■ 2002 ■ 2003 □ 2004
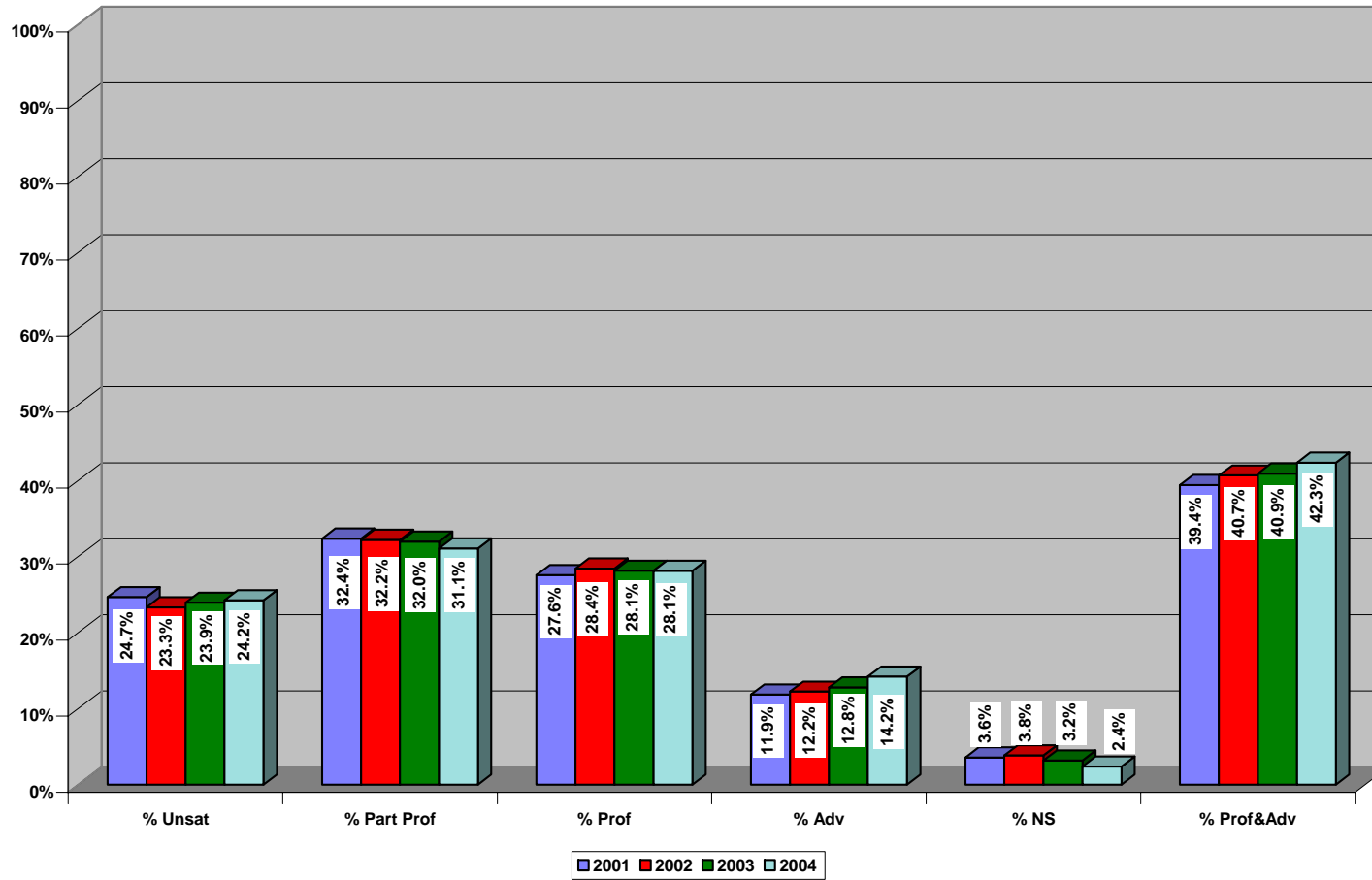
APPENDIX B

Table 2 Safety Incidents and Action Taken

Type of Incident	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	Action Taken
Assault/Fight	2,200	1,788	959	802	In-school suspension
Assault/Fight	7,893	7,769	3,178	2,501	Out-of-school suspension
Assault/Fight	209	95	102	62	Expulsion
Total Assault/Fight	10,302	9,652	4,239	3,365	
Dangerous Weapons	56	86	60	47	In-school suspension
Dangerous Weapons	831	880	725	765	Out-of-school suspension
Dangerous Weapons	341	338	405	432	Expulsions
Total Dangerous Weapons	1,228	1,304	1,190	1,244	
Drugs	102	75	92	65	In-school suspensions
Drugs	3,729	3,470	3,419	3,444	Out-of-school suspensions
Drugs	626	567	546	663	Expulsion
Total Drugs	4,457	4,112	4,057	4,172	
Tobacco	802	717	604	614	In-school suspension
Tobacco	1,588	1,249	1,157	1,126	Out-of-school suspension
Tobacco	2		2	1	Expulsion
Total Tobacco	2,392	1,966	1,763	1,741	
Alcohol	60	43	37	47	In-school suspension
Alcohol	1,095	1,174	1,210	1,205	Out-of-school suspension
Alcohol	39	49	66	65	Expulsion
Total Alcohol	1,194	1,266	1,313	1,317	

Notes: