

Accountability in Education: Research Summary

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Accountability Systems: Learnings from Other States

Overview

Oregon Department of Education researchers examined how different states and large cities in the U.S. evaluate school performance. They found that many use systems similar to Oregon's, including the most common (and ESSA-required) indicators: assessment results, English language proficiency, and measures of on-time graduation or completion. The below analysis highlights practices that diverge from Oregon's system. It is important to note that not all of these practices are fully implemented as some states included in this analysis are still in the process of redesigning their systems. Further, practices noted here are not necessarily recommended by the Oregon Department of Education, rather their inclusion is done so in an effort to point to potential opportunities for consideration when expanding or revising Oregon's accountability system.

Context and School Support

Some states and school districts include additional information about the context of schools, such as resources and community factors. For instance, Chicago Public Schools plans to share data on school resources, teacher turnover, and community challenges to provide a more holistic picture of school success. These factors don't directly impact ratings but offer important context to better understand performance.

Indicators of Student Learning and Skills

Beyond basic assessments, many states measure student learning through a variety of indicators. For example, Maryland, Connecticut, and Chicago look at access to a well-rounded curriculum, including subjects like the arts, health, and physical education. Other states, like Florida, emphasize the completion of advanced math courses. Additionally, Chicago tracks student progress from grades 3-10, which goes beyond Oregon's focus on 9th grade on-track. Some states, like Chicago and Maryland, also consider the professional development of teachers and principals, including turnover rates, qualifications, and training efforts.

Expert Observations

Chicago, New York City, and Vermont have an expert observation model, in which small teams of experienced educators visit each school and provide narratives and/or ratings. Maryland plans to offer a more limited version of this, called the "Expert Review Team," designed to both assess school effectiveness, identify where supports are needed, and surface promising practices to be shared with other schools.

Measuring School Climate and Equity

Federal law (ESSA) requires states to include a measure of school quality or student success (SQSS). Most states chose chronic absenteeism as their SQSS measure, since it is already a federal reporting requirement, but some states opted for other indicators, including survey results, access to well-rounded education, or measures of engagement and inclusion.

Colorado and several other states/districts incorporate pushout rates (sometimes also known as dropout rates). Chicago plans to use availability of mental and physical health interventions and supports, and social-emotional skills instruction. Connecticut incorporates the results of a physical fitness assessment. Chicago and New York City report on access to extracurricular and other enrichment opportunities. Massachusetts reports on work-based learning opportunities,

leadership opportunities, and co-curriculars. Both Hawaii and New York City incorporate measures of the inclusion of students with disabilities, such as inclusion in general education settings/least restrictive environments, and whether IEPs are fully implemented and timeline.

Community Engagement and Climate Surveys

California asks school districts to reflect on how they involve parents and families, and they share their evaluations and stories about their progress. This includes how well staff are trained to build trusting relationships with families, how families are supported to speak up for their children, and how they are given chances to give input on school policies and programs. Similarly, Chicago plans to require schools to report on their community partnerships as part of their updated accountability system.

Several states and cities, like Chicago, New York City, Maryland, Iowa, California, and Hawaii, use climate surveys as part of their ESSA accountability systems. These surveys collect responses from students, staff, and/or parents on different topics. For example, New York City surveys all three groups about things like social-emotional well-being, school leadership, and community relationships. Hawaii combines multiple survey items into an overall score based on how many students respond positively, while Maryland does something similar but also includes responses from educators.

Postsecondary Readiness and Performance

Many states include postsecondary readiness in their accountability systems. Utah, for example, uses a combined measure of graduation, ACT scores, and participation in college or career-prep programs. California and Vermont track students' involvement in Career and Technical Education (CTE) or other work-based learning. Florida reports on postsecondary outcomes, including grades and participation in programs like AP and dual-credit courses.

How Schools are Rated, Recognized, and Incentivized

Under ESSA, all states must identify schools for additional support. Some states group other schools into one category, like New York's "local support and improvement." Other states go further. For example, Utah identifies more low-performing schools as "Elevate" (voluntary support) or "Springboard" (not voluntary). While Oklahoma and Louisiana impose sanctions such as administrative changes or even charter terminations.

High-performing schools also get special recognition in places like Florida, which has a recognition program, and New Mexico, which uses "spotlight" and "excellence" awards. Some states combine accountability and accreditation systems. For example, Kansas requires schools to follow state rules *and* show growth or strong performance to earn accreditation.

Conclusion

While states have different approaches to school accountability, key areas of focus include academic performance, school climate, and community involvement. Some practices offer a more comprehensive view of school success, while others focus on improving specific areas like student learning or teacher support. Oregon can learn from these diverse systems, considering both the benefits and challenges of adopting similar measures.

Key Resources

The below resources provide a snapshot of the systems, policies, and practices being planned for and implemented across the United States. These are not meant to identify recommended practices or practices that Oregon should implement, rather they are included here to provide context and considerations.

California

- [Dashboard Resources - California School Dashboard and System of Support \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)
- [Local Indicators](#)
- [Core Lessons: Measuring the Social and Emotional Dimensions of Student Success](#)

Colorado

- [Accountability Handbook](#)
- [Accountability | CDE](#)

Connecticut:

- [Next Generation Accountability System: Indicator Overview](#)
- [Next Generation Accountability System](#)
- [Postsecondary Dashboard](#)

Delaware:

- [Measuring School Performance – Delaware Department of Education](#)

Florida:

- [High School Feedback Report Data Sources and Calculation Explanations](#)
- [Accountability, Research & Measurement](#)
- [Florida School Recognition Program](#)

Hawaii:

- [Hawaii DOE | Educator Effectiveness System](#)
- [Strive Hawaii Measure and Calculations: Technical Guide](#)

Iowa

- [Differentiated Accountability System | Department of Education](#)
- [School Accountability Under ESSA](#)

Kansas

- [Kansas Integrated Accountability System \(KIAS\)](#)
- [Kansas Integrated Accountability System \(KIAS\) Overview](#)

Maryland:

- [Using Indicators & Measures of School Climate and Conditions for Learning in a Broader System of Data Collection that Supports |](#)
- [Governance + Accountability – Blueprint](#)

Massachusetts

- [Connecting Activities - Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)
- [2023 Accountability School Leader's Guide](#)

New Mexico

- [NM VISTAS Technical Guide \(grad\)](#)
- [New Mexico District & State Report Cards \(school quality\)](#)
- [NM VISTAS](#)
- [District State Report Cards - College and Career Readiness \(CCR\)](#)

New York State:

- [Understanding the New York State Accountability System under the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) for 2023-2024 Accountability Statuses Based on 2022-2023 Results](#)

North Carolina

- [Alternative Schools' Modified accountability system Manual](#)

Utah

- [Next Generation School Accountability in Utah](#)
- [Utah Accountability Technical Manual](#)

Vermont

- [The Annual Snapshot | Agency of Education](#)
- [Integrated Field Reviews | Agency of Education](#)
- [Annual Snapshot Technical Manual | Vermont Agency of Education](#)

Virginia

- [Virginia education board discusses development of new accountability system](#)
- [Board of Education Discussion and Actions on Accountability Reform](#)

Washington State:

- [Alignment | SBE](#)
- [Accountability | SBE](#)
- [Washington State Board of Education: Continuous Improvement and Recognition System Reenvisioning Process](#)
- [Assessing School Climate: A Review of Evidence, Practices and Recommendations for Implementation in Washington State](#)

Chicago

- [The Foundations and Framework for Chicago Public Schools Next Generation District and School Accountability System](#)
- [In Chicago, a new early-warning indicator for elementary schools](#)

Los Angeles

- [Local Control and Accountability Plan](#)
- [Student Equity Needs Index Infographic](#)

New York City

- [Quality Review](#)
- [School Quality Evaluation and Professional Learning \(example\)](#)

Washington, DC

- [Data Collection Summary for Revised Accountability Framework](#)

Academic Research

We have deliberately selected research articles written or published by the Learning Policy Institute as their work is widely recognized as foundational in this field. While this selection of articles do not necessarily represent the breadth of accountability in education research they do provide an overview of the work occurring nationally as well as possible considerations for the Advisory Committee when developing recommendations pursuant to HB2656. All summarized articles are linked for further reading.

Cook-Harvey, C.M. and Stosich, E.L. (2016). **Redesigning school accountability and support: Progress in pioneering states.** *Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and Learning Policy Institute.* Retrieved from: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Redesigning_School_Accountability_and_Support.pdf

High Level Summary:

This brief summarizes the work of the 51st State Working Group composed of a group of states working together to make recommendations for how a hypothetical “51st state” might design and implement policies and strategies to ensure all students are college, career, and life ready upon graduation. Oregon was included in this working group.

Key Points:

1. With the shift from NCLB (No Child Left Behind) to ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act), state policy makers are working to develop more balanced systems of support and accountability that take into account not only end-of-year assessments but also the quality of students’ opportunities to learn, the school environment that supports these learning experiences, access to equitable and adequate resources, and alignment with college and career readiness.
2. Recommendations from the group included: Seamless pathways to college and career; Flexibility and strategies for innovation; Systems of assessment for and of learning; Professional capacity-building; Accountability systems that draw on multiple sources.
3. Participating states also include summaries of their progress which align with the Working Group’s recommendations. Participating states include California, Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Darling-Hammond, L. and Hill, P. T. (2015). **Accountability and the federal role: A third way on ESEA.** *Center on Reinventing Public Education and Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.* Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED556473.pdf>

High Level Summary:

This paper aims to highlight important implications for the design of accountability systems at the local, state, and federal levels as identified in two papers which were analyzed for this report. These primarily come from the summer of 2014 when policy experts were meeting to address the concern that *No Child Left Behind* was undermining the goals of improvement and equity in schools. This paper also ends with a discussion of implications for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Key Points:

1. Public officials are responsible for remedying constraints and eliminating inequalities in funding or access to quality educators. These inequities, if not corrected, can prevent problem-solving and innovation at the school and district level. Public officials are also tasked with providing opportunities for development of educator capacity to improve the education system.
2. The article expresses the importance of standardized testing with high-quality instruments and the use of multiple sources of evidence for student, educator, and school performance (such as tracking progress toward graduation and career readiness, attendance, etc).
3. Accountability systems which use multiple sources of evidence require systems for evaluation where officials, at all levels of governance, are empowered to make informed decisions through thoughtful study, collaboration, and diverse evidence on how to best benefit current students. This structure of an accountability system is not risk free and will require accountability measures for those who are in the position to make decisions, as well.
4. Each level of the public education system has their own accountability standards and these accountability relationships support one another but should not usurp the role of one over another. Families are also an important part of the accountability relationship and should have access to transparent information and be invited to participate in decision making regarding school improvement.
5. Assessments should not stagnate. In order to have high quality assessments available to schools and districts, more work is needed in the creation of these assessments and should be supported by the Federal government. Measurements and standards used to assess schools should move fluidly with the changes in the economy, science and technology.

Darling-Hammond, L, Bae, S., Cook-Harvey, C.M., Lam, L., Mercer, C., Podolsky, A. and Stosich, E.L. (2016). **Pathways to new accountability through the Every Student Succeeds Act.** *Learning Policy Institute and Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.* Retrieved from:
https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/10/pathways_to_new_accountability_through_every_student_succeeds_act_0.pdf

High Level Summary:

This paper provides guidance on how states can redesign their accountability systems under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). It encourages states to develop more balanced systems that focus on preparing students for college, career, and citizenship in the 21st century. The paper provides a comprehensive review of the requirements of ESSA, followed by a conversation of various indicators that may be used in an accountability system that rests on multiple measures to assess learning, opportunities to learn, and student engagement. Also discussed is how these indicators can be combined to identify schools for support and how they can be integrated into a continuous improvement system. The paper concludes by providing a review of research on evidence-based interventions that could be effective in a new accountability framework.

Key Points:

1. Transparency is a critical component of any accountability system. Data dashboards using multiple measures can track information about inputs, processes, and outcomes to inform what is working and not working in schools.
2. An accountability system that focuses on the whole child and the whole school requires a more comprehensive set of indicators (outside of only ESSA requirements) that measure the range of skills and competencies students need to be successful upon graduating from high school including: a focus on meaningful learning, professionally

skilled and committed educators, and adequate and appropriate resources that enable and support the first two pillars.

3. An accountability system should be: Reciprocal and comprehensive; focused on capacity building; performance-based on its means for gauging progress and success; and informed by multiple measures that illuminate what is working and what needs to be improved.
4. The report offers additional indicators states may consider grouped by category:
 - a. Indicators of Academic Outcomes: Measures of academic achievement, Measures of high school graduation, Measures of college and career readiness, Measures of English language proficiency
 - b. Indicators of Opportunities to Learn: Measures of school conditions, Measures of access to a rich curriculum, Measures of access to resources, Measures of access to qualified teachers
 - c. Indicators of Engagement: Measures of attendance and chronic absenteeism, Measures of student suspension and expulsion, Measures of socio-emotional learning

Learning Policy Institute (2024). **State Handbook for Advancing Racial Equity**. *Learning Policy Institute and Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education*. Retrieved from:
https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/4183/download?inline&file=SHARE_TOOL.pdf

High Level Summary:

While this report is not focused solely on accountability, it offers “equity indicators” aimed to strengthen opportunities for learning as well as examples of how states are implementing and living these indicators. The report provides a framework, a rubric, and examples for each of the domains for advancing racial equity in education. The framework is grounded on six interconnected domains:

1. Clear, explicit, and ambitious vision for statewide racial equity.
2. Rich, deeper learning and culturally responsive curricula and practices.
3. Safe, healthy, and inclusive school environments.
4. Financial, human, and material resources that are sufficient, appropriate, and equitably allocated.
5. Meaningful engagement with students, families, interest holders, communities, and leaders.
6. Data systems that drive progress toward racial equity.

Key Points:

1. Having a racial equity vision can be useful because when a racial equity focus is not identified directly, policies and expected norms may ignore important aspects of students’ experiences.
2. Rubrics provide essential questions and look-fors for each domain, in addition to examples of state policy or program.

Kostyo, S., Cardichon, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). **Making ESSA’s equity promise real: State strategies to close the opportunity gap**. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from:
https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/ESSA_Equity_Promise_REPORT.pdf

High Level Summary:

This report serves as a follow-up to Advancing Equity for Underserved Youth providing evidence of how states are implementing and living into the equity indicators shared in the Advancing Equity for Underserved Youth report. Equity

indicators include: Reduce rates of student suspension; Build a positive school climate; Reduce rates of chronic absenteeism; Implement an extended-year graduation rate (i.e., 5–7 years) alongside the traditional 4-year rate; and Expand access to a college- and career-ready curriculum. Examples provided throughout the report demonstrate ways in which states have leveraged these equity indicators when building their accountability systems in an effort to both demonstrate the value of these indicators as well as ensure that there are mechanisms by which to measure progress and impact.

Key Points:

1. There are a number of states to learn from that have integrated the equity indicators into their accountability systems with some states using multiple measures including survey data within their systems.
2. “Well-chosen indicators of school conditions and outcomes can leverage greater attention to key aspects of education that shape students’ opportunities to learn as well as student outcomes—and to do so in ways that can produce much greater equity” (p. 1).
3. Examples are provided to denote which states are using the equity indicators to identify schools for CSI (comprehensive school improvement) or TSI (targeted school improvement) in their accountability systems; which states using the “equity indicators” to inform improvement efforts; and those states using the equity indicators for measurement or improvement purposes, such as statewide data reporting or piloting for possible future use. See pages 4-5 for a table outlining these efforts. Additionally, case studies of several states are provided throughout the report including information on implementation of these indicators.
4. Policy considerations are provided for each of the indicators - these policy considerations are not tied to the work of specific states rather shared as general considerations for states to consider integrating these equity indicators within their systems.
5. The report highlights considerations for not only integrating the equity indicators within accountability systems, but doing so “well”. Considerations include: ensuring that educators have ongoing access to data in a user-friendly format, that data is disaggregated to allows for analysis of performance on the individual measure overall and by student subgroup as well as a note regarding strategies to leverage federal funding to support the implementation of evidence-based strategies (in addition to school improvement funding and direct services funding).