

Standards of Learning Innovation Committee
Accountability 2.0 Subcommittee Recommendations
July 2015

Introduction

We believe that Virginia's accountability system should have two purposes. One purpose is to assess schools' effectiveness in producing graduates who are prepared for responsible citizenship and success in the world beyond school (Innovation Committee, 2014 Report). Meaningful accountability data can provide checkpoints for schools and their stakeholders as they work toward a broad set of learning outcomes and strive to "inspire, engage, and personalize learning for every student" (Innovation Committee, 2014 Report). We envision a system that references consistent statewide benchmarks, documents progress and student growth, and provides opportunities for schools to communicate data of particular interest to their own communities.

A second purpose of accountability is to leverage support for schools' improvement efforts. We believe this support should be evidence-based, effective, customizable, transparent, and credible. We contend that an emphasis on labeling and sanctioning schools generally does not produce the results we desire. Rather, the process must fully engage faculty and leaders in the collaborative design and implementation of personalized learning for both students and staff- the real work of school improvement.

In order to create a system that achieves these two purposes, we must reduce the reliance on SOL test data as a measure of school quality and effectiveness. Instead, we should be guided by a "whole child accountability" vision, one in which accountability measures capture the most essential student outcomes and the conditions that schools must create to achieve those outcomes. We envision a multimetric system that includes and values measures other than test scores.

Between January and May 2015, the Accountability 2.0 Subcommittee focused on (1) the criteria and process for accrediting Virginia schools and (2) Virginia's school report card. Given the Board of Education's concurrent review of accreditation ratings and the school report card, it seemed reasonable to start with these areas. In the coming months, the Assessment 2.0 Subcommittee's recommended model and the Innovation Committee's work will certainly suggest additional and perhaps different revisions to the accountability system. We hope to reconvene at a future time to extend and align our recommendations and to support the work of these groups.

Subcommittee Recommendations

The Subcommittee offers the following recommendations, primarily related to the accountability system, the school report card. Though we think these recommendations represent positive steps, they are not sufficient to achieve the system to which we aspire. We offer them simply as starting points for continued discussion.

Recommendation 1: Multiple Measures Included in Accreditation Ratings

Students' academic success should appropriately remain the main consideration in school accreditation. **Academic success at the school level should be represented by both "point-in-time" achievement and individual student growth measures.**

1a. We recommend that the academic indicators included in accreditation be:

- Growth measures in reading and mathematics in elementary and middle school. Growth measures are defined here as assessments that show changes in individual student proficiency over time.
- Documentation of a variety of credentials in high school (for example, a community college entrance assessment (VPT), AP/IB/SAT/ACT tests, industry certification, and successful completion of college coursework).
- Periodic "point-in-time" achievement tests using content and format that is developmentally appropriate for the age of the students being tested.
- One or more measures of learning that span a range of subjects and require work at higher cognitive levels, perhaps requiring students to work with authentic problems or interdisciplinary themes.
- A limited number of end-of-course assessments in high school credit-bearing courses.

1b. The accountability system should describe the achievement and growth of all students while acknowledging students that learn differently. Specifically, we recommend that schools use an assessment designed to measure the language proficiency of English Language Learners to determine which other measures will be valid and appropriate for the student. A student's English language proficiency should determine if the student is eligible to participate in regular testing, eligible for a differentiated cut score or alternative assessment, or is exempt from state testing. The assessment should also provide a measure of growth in the student's English language proficiency, which could serve as documentation of student learning.

We look forward to the Assessment 2.0 Subcommittee's proposed assessment model, which may align with these recommendations. The Accountability 2.0 Subcommittee or the Innovation Committee may decide to revise this recommendation based on their work.

1c. Accreditation data should be timely, accessible and reported in ways that are actionable, in order to drive school improvement and address gaps in achievement.

1d. Indicators of school quality not directly measured by tests are important to include in school accreditation as well. At minimum, graduation rate (for those schools with graduating classes), attendance (for schools not having graduating classes) and a measure of school climate that is richer and more informative than a discipline incident report are essential components. Periodic assessment of school social and behavioral contexts (climate) is important here, as problems in these domains disproportionately affect the success of students with disabilities.

Recommendation 2: The School Report Card and Data Dashboard

Accountability results are important to parents, communities, and the public at large, but there are other data that are of interest as well. Our subcommittee charge focused on accountability, but our discussion convinced us that **school report cards should do more than document accountability results**. They are also vital communication tools which describe and "tell the story" of the school. The report cards we thought were most effective included but were not limited to accountability data. They featured additional information of interest to stakeholders, particularly contextual data, the importance of which the Board of Education recently discussed.

2a. We recommend presenting the school report card (accountability data) along with additional data in a dashboard format that is accessible and understandable to the public. The dashboard should present information "at a glance" with easy access to more detailed supporting data to allow users to view data at a variety of levels.

2b. We recommend that these additional data be selected elements that are important to school quality and of interest to parents and the public, but that they not be included in accreditation ratings.

2c. We recommend that these elements be descriptive of the community in which the school operates (e.g. demographic information and local fiscal effort) as well as indicative of whole child education (e.g. participation in fine arts and extra curricular programs and measures of equity).

2d. We recommend that the report card include a link or space where schools may self-report areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. This not only provides information to the public, but also acknowledges that schools at all levels of performance have both accomplishments worthy of recognition and needs for continuous improvement.

2e. We recommend that the dashboard display data in formats that provide context (e.g. peer group comparisons, trends over time, etc.).

2f. We recommend a dashboard that is a dynamic, "real-time" document in which information is updated as data becomes available.

Recommendation 3: Classroom Assessment

Though classroom assessment was not the focus of our discussion, it is inextricably linked to accountability measures. **We recommend that teachers, building leaders, division-level administrators, and Virginia Department of Education staff work collaboratively to share and advance best practices in classroom assessment.** Ongoing formative assessment is essential to advance learning for all students and perhaps most critical for students with disabilities and those for whom English is a second language. Additionally, as the number of high-stakes tests declines, opportunities to implement deeper, more authentic summative assessments will continue to increase. Our hope is that actions at the state level motivate educators at all levels to increase students' opportunities to give and receive meaningful feedback and to participate in assessment for learning.

Recommendation 4: A Single Accreditation Rating

We support the Board of Education's decision to expand the list of accountability ratings so as to acknowledge schools whose pass rates have improved or are close to meeting the criteria for accreditation. This is a positive step and very helpful in the short term. We maintain, however, that ranking schools- whether those rankings are denoted by letter grades, stars, or other labels- is neither essential nor desirable in a strong accountability system. Ranking becomes unnecessary when timely data on multiple measures is reported in a clear, accessible way. In the next iteration of the accreditation system, **sanctions based solely on test results should be eliminated and accreditation should exist as a single designation rather than a ranking system.**

4a. We recommend multiple pathways to school accreditation leading to a single designation: Accredited School.

4b. We recommend that schools be able to achieve this status either by meeting all performance benchmarks or by a combination of meeting most benchmarks and showing acceptable progress towards meeting remaining benchmarks. In the case of elementary schools, documenting student growth should be the key element of accreditation (see recommendation 1a).

4c. Data should be reviewed and accreditation designation assigned on a multi-year cycle for accredited schools, and annually for non-accredited schools.

Recommendation 5: Support for School Improvement

The accountability system must designate a threshold of performance below which schools receive ongoing, meaningful support. Within a standard framework, schools should exercise some degree of choice regarding the level and type of support that is provided.

5a. On-site reviews should be considered as one way to offer support for school improvement. However, these reviews should only be implemented if:

- The review and reporting protocol is valid and produces reliable and meaningful feedback.
- The review process is transparent and clearly understandable to the school and community in advance.
- Resources accompany recommended changes, including incentives for teachers to increase the time spent working with colleagues to strengthen their own skills and to improve the performance of the school as a whole.
- The review process leverages technology applications such as video-based observations, distance coaching, online collaboration, and video conferencing as options.

5b. Any support strategies or programs should acknowledge that meaningful, lasting improvement will not occur absent engagement of the people who are doing the work with students. Therefore, strategies for improvement should be designed or chosen with significant participation of school staff.

Recommendation 6: Policy Changes

Creating and implementing the system we need is certain to be a multi-year effort, and it warrants both an immediate infusion of resources as well as a long-term commitment. A characteristic of successful reform efforts in other states and countries is **a clear description of intended outcomes and purposeful, incremental steps toward those outcomes over a period of years.**

6a. The Board of Education, General Assembly, and Governor's Office should join forces to provide policy, regulation and guidance that create a state-of-the art accountability system, understanding that this requires a multi-year sustained and focused effort.

6b. This system should be built and sustained by a level of investment that reflects the value we place on ensuring high-quality schools for Virginia's students. Funding must be sufficient to allow all schools to meet the requirements of The Code of Virginia and the Standards of Quality.

Conclusion

Graduates of Virginia's public schools need and deserve an education that prepares them to go confidently into further education, career paths, and active roles in their communities and the global economy. Achieving this goal requires retooling our systems and methods from the state level to the individual classroom, and the accountability system is one component of this complex web. We respectfully refer these recommendations to the Innovation Committee for consideration as the Committee pursues its desired outcomes. Members of the Accountability 2.0 Subcommittee look forward to our role in advancing this work.

Accountability 2.0

- Convened as a subcommittee of the Innovation Committee in January 2015 with a six-month timeline for initial recommendations.
- Chose accreditation and the school report card as focus areas.
- Submitted recommendations to the full Committee June 30 2015.

Purposes of an Accreditation System

- Assess school effectiveness in producing graduates who are prepared for responsible citizenship and success in the world beyond school.
- Leverage support for school improvement.

A system that is less punitive and linked to effective supports.

Multimetric, yes, but which measures?
Few, evidence-based, directly measurable.

ACCREDITATION

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)
Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)
Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)
School Progress on Achievement & Growth Measures

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)
Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)
School Progress on Achievement & Growth Measures
Graduation Rate
Attendance

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)
Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)
School Progress on Achievement & Growth Measures
Graduation Rate
Attendance
School Climate

Data reporting: timely, accessible, actionable.

ACCREDITATION

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)
Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)
School Progress on Achievement & Growth
Measures
Graduation Rate
Attendance
School Climate

*One accreditation designation,
but multiple ways to get there.*

*Replace annual school report card
with real-time school profile in a dashboard format.*

ACCREDITATION

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)
Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)
School Progress on Achievement & Growth
Measures
Graduation Rate
Attendance
School Climate

Selected descriptive elements:

- demographics
- local fiscal effort
- whole child, equity indicators

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)

Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)

School Progress on Achievement & Growth Measures

Graduation Rate

Attendance

School Climate

Self-reported areas of strength and goals

Selected descriptive elements:

- demographics
- local fiscal effort
- whole child, equity indicators

Student Achievement (Tests, Products, Credentials)

Student Growth (ELA & Math, Elem & Middle)

School Progress on Achievement & Growth Measures

Graduation Rate

Attendance

School Climate

Next Steps

- Joint meetings of Assessment and Accountability Subcommittees (Nov.- Jan.) to align and add to current recommendations.
- Greater consideration given to the Standards themselves and the desired outcomes of a revision process.