

The Alliance for Student Achievement

Defining a Quality Educational Accountability System

Rationale

Student achievement is the cornerstone of all education. The Alliance for Student Achievement, an alliance of Minnesota's ten major education associations, is listening carefully to concerns regarding accountability in public schools. The Alliance supports a strong accountability system and believes it is necessary to agree upon a definition of accountability for productive dialogue and action to occur. A strong accountability system should include the following:

Accountability Processes for Quality Education

- A uniform process is used to collect and organize various data describing the performance of students, schools and districts.
 - The information is evaluated uniformly, successes or areas needing improvement are identified, and rewards or consequences are determined.
 - The following elements are included:
 - Indicators of performance
 - Benchmarks for evaluating performance
 - Actions based on whether goals are being achieved
 - Methods for involving all stakeholders
 - Evidence of effectiveness is documented. To increase student achievement, the processes must provide timely, comparable and accurate data regarding the effectiveness of educational programs.
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Accountability Measures for Quality Education

The Alliance believes accountability measures should take into account the diverse range of student backgrounds in our state. An effective accountability system would include the following measures to support school district decisions about funding, staffing, training and curriculum.

Student Achievement Measures

- *Annual student academic growth* – Benchmarks need to be established, followed by measurement of progress toward these standards. Individual student academic growth should be measured over time.
- *Demographically similar comparisons* – Student performance in demographically similar classrooms, schools, districts, states, and countries should be compared using common standards and benchmarks.
- *Multiple measures of student achievement* – Measures include standardized test results, task performance, and post graduation success in the workplace or in post-secondary education.
- *Multiple measures of site and district effectiveness* – Measures include curriculum alignment and teaching and administrative competence. Uniform standards need to be applied statewide based on national standards.

Learning Environment Measures

- *Safe and orderly schools* - Measures include an increase or decrease in discipline referrals, suspensions, expulsions, etc. by the same cohort of students over time, or in comparison to other students in demographically similar communities.
- *Student participation* – The ratio of participation in school activities is similar to school community demographics.
- *Attendance, mobility, graduation and drop-out rate* – Students are more successful when they attend one school regularly.

Fiscal Responsibility Measures

- *Expenditures and revenues* – Measures include the student population served by each district.
- *Cost comparisons* – Measures include the same definitions (such as class size), describe and account outsourced services, identify mandated costs, and categorize state and local revenue.
- *School finance and results* – Measures of achievement, learning environment and finance should be compared school to school, or district to district, with those having similar funding and demographics.