

Appendix A: State Accountability Principles in Full, with Scoring Ranges

1) Adoption of demanding, clear, and specific standards in all core content areas, and rigorous assessment of those standards

- A. State content standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, U.S. History, and science are rigorous, clear, and specific.²⁶

Strong: Standards earn an A or B average across the subjects.

Medium: Standards earn a C average across the subjects.

Weak: Standards earn a D or F average across the subjects.

- B. State assesses student learning in the core content areas (ELA with writing, mathematics, history, and science) to determine student mastery of state content standards

Strong: State fulfills the federal requirements for ELA and math (testing annually in third through eighth grades, plus once in high school), and assesses science annually and U.S. History at least once in each of three grade spans (elementary, middle, and high school).

Medium: State fulfills the federal requirements, plus either tests annually in science or tests at least once in each of three grade spans in U.S. History.

Weak: State fulfills only the federal requirements (ELA and math assessments annually in third through eighth grades, plus once in high school; science assessments once in each of three grade spans).

²⁶ As measured by the Fordham Institute's recent reports on state standards: *The State of State Standards—and the Common Core—in 2010*, *The State of State U.S. History Standards 2011*, and *The State of State Science Standards 2012*. State results can be found at <http://standards.educationgadfly.net/>.

- C. State has in place rigorous assessment cut scores.²⁷

***Strong:** The state's proficiency cut scores equate to the **proficient** achievement level of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for all of the following:*

Grade 4 Reading

Grade 8 Reading

Grade 4 Mathematics

Grade 8 Mathematics

***Medium:** The state's proficiency cut scores at least equate to the **basic** achievement level of the NAEP for all of the following:*

Grade 4 Reading

Grade 8 Reading

Grade 4 Mathematics

Grade 8 Mathematics

***Weak:** The state's proficiency cut scores equate to the **below basic** achievement level of the NAEP in one or more of the following:*

Grade 4 Reading

Grade 8 Reading

Grade 4 Mathematics

Grade 8 Mathematics

2) Reporting of accessible and actionable data to all stakeholders, including summative outcome data and other formative data to drive continuous improvement

- A. State releases annual aggregate student outcome data in an accessible manner (meaning clear and user-friendly) and state databases permit school-level comparisons.

***Strong:** For every school, states should publish results that include a snapshot of how many students are reaching various achievement levels (such as basic, proficient, advanced, etc.), how many students are making expected progress over time, and whether the school itself is improving from year to year. (Of course, states should also require that schools provide reports to parents on their own child's performance and progress.) In addition, the state should collect and report data on multiple measures of student performance whenever possible. These might include attendance, graduation rates, on-*

²⁷ As measured by the National Center for Education Statistics' report, *Mapping State Proficiency Standards Onto the NAEP Scales: Variation and Change in State Standards for Reading and Mathematics, 2005–2009* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, August 2011), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2011458>.

track indicators, postsecondary matriculation/retention or remediation rates, course completion (transcript data), attainment of industry certification, and performance on SAT, ACT, and AP/IB exams. State databases should also permit school-level comparisons.

States should also require that the data above be disaggregated by school-level subgroups of race/ethnicity, gender, free and reduced-price lunch status, special-needs status, English language learner status, and so on. States might also choose to substitute one or more of these groups with a low-performing subgroup or high-performing subgroup (i.e., “super subgroup”).

Medium: State provides snapshot data of how many students are reaching various achievement levels by subgroup, but does not report either how many students are making expected progress over time or whether the school is improving from year to year. Multiple measures may or may not be reported. Additionally, the state suffers from no more than one of the following: hard-to-find data on the state website; unclear data presentation; or a database that does not permit school-level comparison (though it may permit district-to-district comparisons or school-to-district comparisons).

Weak: State provides snapshot data of how many students are reaching various achievement levels by subgroup, but does not report how many students are making expected progress over time or whether the school is improving from year to year. Multiple measures may or may not be reported. Additionally, the state suffers from two or more of the following: hard-to-find data on the state website; unclear data presentation; or a database that does not permit school-level comparisons (though it may permit district-to-district comparisons or school-to-district comparisons).

- B. State presents data on multiple measures of student performance. These might include attendance, graduation rates, on-track indicators, postsecondary matriculation/retention or remediation rates, course completion (transcript data), attainment of industry certification, and performance on SAT, ACT, and AP/IB exams.

Strong: State presents data on three or more measures of student performance (in addition to proficiency and/or growth data).

Medium: State presents data on at least two other measures of student performance.

Weak: State presents data on one other measure of student performance.

3) Annual determinations and designations for each school and district that meaningfully differentiate their performance

- A. Multiple (not fewer than three) user-friendly school and district designations, which rate schools on their effectiveness via accountability provisions, are reported annually (e.g., Florida’s A-to-F system).

Strong: State meets four criteria: 1) It has annual school and district designations in place (three or more for each); 2) those designations are understandable in terms of how they are derived; 3) they include appropriate nomenclature that reflects performance; and 4) each of the labeled categories is structured such that high percentages of schools do not disproportionately fall into the top tiers.

Medium: State has in place at least two of the four above criteria.

Weak: State has in place one or none of the four above criteria.

- B. School and district designations are based, in part, on measures of individual student growth (either normative growth or growth to standard). Further, the designations include performance of specific student groups or a “super subgroup” (e.g., a subgroup combining students by race/ethnicity, English language learner and special-needs status, income, lowest/highest performance, etc.).

Strong: School and district designations are based, in part, on measures of individual student growth. They also include results disaggregated by multiple subgroups or one or more “super subgroups.” The state may also specify whether students are on track to meet graduation requirements and/or college- and career-ready standards.

Medium: School and district designations are based, in part, on cross-sectional growth or school or classroom growth. They also include results disaggregated by multiple subgroups or one or more “super subgroups.”

Weak: School and district designations are based solely on student proficiency (i.e., a fixed measure) or proficiency and other criteria but not growth; and/or they do not include performance of subgroups.

4) A system of rewards and consequences to drive improvement at the school and district levels

- A. Accountability system provides incentives for all schools and districts to achieve at high levels, including, but not limited to, bestowing “honor roll”

or similar “blue ribbon/distinguished” status on deserving schools and districts; offering financial rewards; permitting increased autonomy in operations/spending; allowing other regulatory relief (e.g., automatic renewal of district accreditation) in exchange for meeting heightened district accountability provisions and/or as a reward for performance or growth.

Strong: System provides more than two types of incentives for both schools and districts to achieve at high levels (other than the state accountability designation labels). Incentives at each level must include financial rewards, increased autonomy, or other regulatory relief, and can also include “status” recognition.

Medium: System provides at least one incentive for schools and districts to achieve at high levels (other than the designation labels; can include “status” recognition).

Weak: System provides no incentives for schools or districts to achieve at high levels (other than the state accountability designation labels).

- B. Accountability system requires targeted interventions for low-performing schools, such as replacement of the majority of the staff, charter conversion, state takeover, contracts with outside entities to operate the school, and automatic school closure after consecutive years of failure. (Any or multiple interventions may also be catalyzed via “parent trigger” provisions.) Further, system does not include loopholes by which low performers can avoid tough sanctions; does not water down one or more sanction(s); does not delay sanctions for unreasonable time periods; and/or does not restrict sanctions to fewer than 5 percent of the lowest-performing schools.

Strong: Multiple concrete sanctions exist for low-performing schools, which include automatic school closure after repeated failure; no loopholes or other sanction-avoidance mechanisms in place.

Medium: At least one concrete sanction exists for low-performing schools and loopholes and other sanction-avoidance mechanisms are minimal.

Weak: System provides no meaningful sanctions for low-performing schools, or meaningful sanctions are one option alongside weaker sanctions (i.e., easy loophole).

5) A system of rewards and consequences to drive improvement at the individual student level

- A. State has multiple methods by which students are held to account individually for their performance.

Strong: State has multiple methods by which students are held to account individually for their performance; these may include, but are not limited to: requirements that students pass cumulative high school exit exams in the core subject areas in order to receive a diploma; pass end-of-course exams to get credit for courses or pass end-of-course exams that are integrated into final course grades; pass “gateway” assessments in one or more key grades and subjects in order to be promoted to the next grade (e.g., pass a reading test in elementary school). State may also have a “no pass, no play” policy that requires students to pass all of their courses in order to participate in extracurricular activities, or a “no pass, no driver’s license” policy. States might also reward individual students via guaranteed entry into college and/or guaranteed college assistance (or “priority status”) for eligible students with high GPAs, SAT, or ACT scores.

Medium: States have one or two mechanisms in place to hold individual students accountable for their performance, including one of the following: requirements that students pass cumulative high school exit exams in the core subject areas in order to receive a diploma; or pass end-of-course exams to get credit for courses or end-of-course exams that are integrated into final course grades; or pass “gateway” assessments in one or more key grades and subjects in order to be promoted to the next grade (e.g., pass a reading test in elementary school).

Weak: States have no policies that hold individual students accountable for their performance.

6) A system of rewards and consequences to drive improvement at the individual teacher and administrator level

- A. State requires annual evaluations of all teachers and principals.

Strong: Annual evaluations for all teachers and principals, regardless of experience or status, are required.

Medium: Annual evaluations for some teachers and/or some principals are required.

Weak: Annual evaluations for neither teachers nor principals are required.

- B. State requires that teacher evaluations for all core subject areas include measures of student performance and/or growth on state assessments (assumes that student and teacher data can be linked); state also allows results from the evaluation to be used for continuing employment decisions.

Strong: Teacher evaluations for all core subject areas include measures of student performance and/or growth; state allows results to be used for continuing employment decisions.

Medium: Only in math and reading do teacher evaluations include measures of student performance and/or growth; state allows results to be used for continuing employment decisions.

Weak: Teacher evaluations do not include measures of student performance and/or growth, or student-teacher data cannot be linked; and/or state prohibits results to be used for continuing employment decisions.

- C. State has in place policies that incentivize individual teacher effectiveness and productivity by requiring that districts factor teacher performance into their salary scales (e.g., individual merit pay and/or other individual performance-based bonuses for tasks such as teaching in high-needs schools).

Strong: State requires that districts factor teacher performance into their salary scales.

Medium: State permits/encourages districts to factor teacher performance into their salary scales.

Weak: State prohibits districts from factoring teacher performance into their salary scales.

- D. State has in place other policies that incentivize individual teacher effectiveness and productivity, including, but not limited to: extended contracts, career ladders (e.g., master teachers), personnel decisions based on performance (e.g., no “last in, first out” policies), etc.

Strong: State has two or more of these policies in place to incentivize individual teacher effectiveness.

Medium: State has at least one of these policies in place to incentivize individual teacher effectiveness.

Weak: State has none of these policies in place to incentivize individual teacher effectiveness, or has ill-advised policies that do the opposite (e.g., confer tenure on all teachers in three years or fewer, specify that tenured teachers need not be evaluated annually, etc.).

- E. State mandates that principals be evaluated, in part, according to school performance and that those evaluations inform employment status.

Strong: State mandates that principal evaluations be based, in part, on school performance and allows those results to inform employment status.

Medium: State mandates that principal evaluations be based, in part, on school performance but does not allow those results to inform employment status.

Weak: State does not mandate that principals be evaluated, in part, based on school performance.

- F. State offers incentives for effective principals including bonuses, extended contracts, enhanced autonomy, etc. “Strong” states may also offer incentives for superintendents and/or school board members based on performance.

Strong: State has more than two policies in place that incentivize effective leadership, including merit pay/performance-based bonuses.

Medium: State has at least one policy in place that incentivizes effective leadership.

Weak: State has no policies in place to incentivize effective leadership.