

ACCOUNTABILITY—REPORTING TO THE PUBLIC

With the system of Learning Results at the state level and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) at the federal level, “accountability” has become a dominant theme in education today.

Many people think of accountability as holding schools and educators responsible for student progress toward specific educational goals, whether these goals are expressed in terms of student achievement of the content standards of the system of Learning Results or “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) under NCLB. Accountability applies not only to schools and educators, but to school units (LEAs) and school boards as well.

School units are accountable to the State through the Comprehensive Education Plan, the reporting of data regarding student achievement, and other mechanisms. They are also accountable on the federal level through the data reporting requirements associated with NCLB.

School boards are accountable to the citizens of the school unit for the decisions they make and for student achievement and the effectiveness of the school unit’s instructional programs. As educators need information gained through student assessment to inform teaching and learning, boards need information that will assist them in making policy and planning decisions and to keep the public informed concerning student achievement. Accountability is essential in supporting continuous school improvement.

This new sample policy addresses various aspects of accountability, stressing the relationship between accurate reporting of information regarding student achievement and, in general, the operations of the schools to informed board decision-making. Because accountability is a fundamental concept, we have coded this policy for placement in the “A” section (Foundations and Basic Commitments) section of the board’s policy manual.

When discussing this policy, board members and Executive Directors may wish to explore the idea of “reciprocal accountability.” While most of the accountability for student achievement has focused on schools and educators, boards may wish to think about the expectations they have of students, parents, and community in the student learning and support of their local schools. The role of parents is considered more fully in sample policy KB, Parent Involvement in Education, the final policy in this package.

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The Board is conscious of its responsibility for making informed decisions that will impact student learning and school system operations. As an elected body, the Board recognizes that it is accountable to the citizens of the school unit for its decisions and the educational achievement of its students. Basic to accountability is the reporting of data **[OR: information]** concerning student achievement and, in general, the operations of the schools.

The Board directs the Executive Director to prepare appropriate reports that will provide the Board with the information it needs **[OR: the information required]** to make appropriate policy and planning decisions and to keep the public informed regarding the academic progress of its students, the effectiveness of school programs, and the needs of the school system. As practicable, the Executive Director may combine such reports into a single document and/or presentation or use multiple reporting processes, depending upon the nature of the information. Such reports shall be made available to the public.

The Executive Director shall also be responsible for gathering and submitting data to the Maine Department of Education (DOE) and other agencies as required by law and/or regulations and for preparing and disseminating reports to the Board and the public in compliance with applicable laws and/or regulations. Data collated by the State shall be incorporated into reports to the Board and/or public as mandated by law and/or regulations.

A. District Annual Report

Each year the Executive Director shall prepare and present to the Board an annual report addressing the activities of the school unit and his/her recommendation(s) for improving student learning and school system operations. The report shall be made available to the public as a means of informing parents and citizens of the school system's goals, plans, programs, and operations.

B. Comprehensive Plan Report

Each school unit must develop and implement a Comprehensive Education Plan that is aligned with Maine's system of Learning Results, focused on the learning of all students, and oriented to continuous improvement and includes the elements listed in Chapter 125, Section 4.02, of the Department of Education Rules. The Executive Director shall make an annual report to the Board and public on the school system's Comprehensive Education Plan and school improvement progress. The Board shall annually review and approve the Comprehensive Education Plan.

C. Local Assessment System

The Executive Director/designee, with the assistance of appropriate staff, will prepare for the Board's review and for dissemination to the public, on an annual basis, the results of the Local Assessment System. The purpose is to enable the Board and public to monitor student progress in achieving the content standards of the system of Learning Results and to make informed decisions concerning the instructional program and allocation of resources.

D. District Report Cards

In compliance with federal law and regulations and to provide relevant information concerning the academic performance of the school system and of its individual schools, the Executive Director shall be responsible for annually collecting and submitting required data and for preparing and making available to schools, the parents of children in those schools, and the public a "district report card."

As required by federal law, district report cards shall contain the following information:

1. Aggregate data on student achievement at each proficiency level on state academic assessments and disaggregated data reflecting race, ethnicity, gender, disability, migrant status, English proficiency, and status as economically disadvantaged;
2. Comparison of these student groups regarding achievement levels on each of the State assessments;
3. Percentage of students not tested, disaggregated by student groups;
4. Most recent two-year trend data in achievement by subject area and grade level in areas where assessments are required;
5. Aggregate data on state indicators to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), such as attendance rates for elementary schools;
6. Graduation rates for secondary schools, disaggregated by student groups;
7. Information on the school unit's performance relevant to Adequate Yearly Progress and the number, percentage, and names of schools identified for improvement, including how long they have been so identified;

8. Professional qualifications of teachers and percentage of teachers with emergency or provisional qualification;
9. Percentage of classes not taught by highly qualified teachers, in the aggregate and disaggregated by high poverty and low poverty level schools; and
10. Comparison of the school unit's student achievements on state assessments and other indicators of Adequate Yearly Progress to students in the state as a whole.

[NOTE: Subsections 1-10 reflect the No Child Left Behind Act requirements listed in 20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(1)(C); 20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(2)(E) requires this data to be included in the local educational agency report card.]

As applied to data for individual schools, the district report card will include the following information:

1. The same information contained in the district report card;
2. Whether the school has been identified for school improvement; and
3. Information that shows how the school's students' achievement on the statewide academic assessments and other indicators of Adequate Yearly Progress compared to students in the school unit and the state as a whole. *(20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(2)(B)).*

[NOTE: The Maine Department of Education's Maine Education Data Management System (MEDMS) is intended to allow the Department to communicate with local school units and manage data for state and federal regulatory and assessment compliance. It is MSMA's understanding that MEDMS is designed to meet the No Child Left Behind reporting requirements and to satisfy the DOE's Chapter 125 and 127 requirements.

MSMA is uncertain as to how MEDMS will manage data from school units' unique local assessment systems. However, MEDMS may provide an effective way for the State to collect raw local data and for school units to incorporate DOE-synthesized data into their reports. Federal law (20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(2)(E)) requires that the local educational agency must "publicly disseminate the information required in the district report card to all schools in the school district served by the local educational agency and to all parents of students attending those schools in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable,

provided in a language that the parents can understand, and make the information widely available through public means such as posting on the Internet, distribution to the media, and distribution through public agencies, except that if a local educational agency issues a report card for all students, the local educational agency may include the [required] information as part of such report.” Simply directing parents and the public to the school unit or DOE website may not be sufficient to accomplish public dissemination.

As provided by law, the district report card may include other appropriate information, whether or not such information is included in the annual State report card. See 20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(1)(D) for examples of information that might be included.]

E. Responsibilities Associated with District

The Executive Director/designee shall be responsible for:

1. Updating and submitting required information;
2. Providing district report cards to parents of students in the district’s schools in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand; and
3. Making district and school report cards widely available through public means, such as distribution to the media, posting on the Internet, and distribution through public agencies.

F. Financial Reports

The Executive Director/designee shall provide to the Board and public monthly **[OR: quarterly]** reports concerning the financial condition of the school system.

G. Other Reports

The Board may request and the Executive Director/designee shall provide to the Board and/or public other reports related to school system goals and objectives, the instructional program, and operations of the schools.

Legal Reference: 20 U.S.C. § 6311 (No Child Left Behind Act)
20-A M.R.S.A. §§ 4502(1), (6)
Ch. 125, 127 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Cross Reference: ADF – School District Commitment to Learning Results
ILA – Student Assessment/Local Assessment System
KD - Public Information and Communications

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