

Design Proposal For Accountability Under ESSA

By Indianapolis Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellows

+++++ INTRODUCTION +++++

As a group of high-performing teachers in Indiana who teach in high-poverty schools, we have learned from our experiences in classrooms that the learning gaps among subgroups of students are not the result of differences in their abilities or talents, but rather the result of a broken public education system—with differences in expectations, in access to effective teachers, in access to purposeful school cultures, and in access to enriching learning opportunities. These differences are uniformly tilted to the disadvantage of the students who fill our classrooms: students from low-income families and children of color. This proposal is not meant to be punitive on already-struggling schools, but to help the state under the new Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) law to allocate funds appropriately to improve specific deficiencies as identified by this accountability system. Our experiences drive the convictions that underlie our design for accountability systems under ESSA.

The following is adapted from an award-winning model for an ESSA accountability system designed by Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellows and alumni from Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, Memphis, and Washington, D.C.

+++++ OUR DESIGN PRINCIPLES +++++

We propose a two-tier accountability system with Tier 1, called “The Indicators” and Tier 2, called “The Supports.” This layered approach allows for both reporting and learning, the factors that are most important to school success, so that our state can best direct resources and support to schools that need it the most. The first part will provide metrics that are informative but not determinative. The rationale for such a system is based on several design principles:

- + We need to debate what is most important in determining a school's quality and then drive resources toward what is most important and will make the most difference for students.
- + The rating system needs to be simple, easy to understand, and easy to act upon. The alternative, an overly complex index of multiple measures, can undermine transparency and make it difficult to interpret numbers and design next steps.
- + Creating rating systems based on too many metrics will water down the significance and weight of these most important factors.
- + While academic and non-academic indicators measure important outcomes, schools and districts need to be able to make evidence-based decisions on how to improve. By analyzing the impact of shifts in results, schools and districts will be able to form actionable hypotheses on how best to drive improvement.



+++++ TIER 1: THE INDICATORS +++++

The Indicators are what we deem to be the most important performance indicators for school quality. Ratings in our accountability system will be based on a composite score of a school's performance across these indicators.

ACADEMIC INDICATORS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

1. Measure of Grade Level Proficiency: Using assessment data from annual statewide assessment (ILEARN)

- + Our design places a primary focus on student achievement in reading and math. At all times, we need to ensure that students are learning and achieving at high levels.
- + Four Performance Levels: Exceeds Standard, At/Near Standard, Below Standard, Far Below Standard
- + Weighting for Scores: 1.25x for Exceeds Standard, 1.0x for At/Near Standard, .75x for Below Standard, or .50x for Far Below Standard
- + This weighting system incentivizes moving students up levels. Schools will be incentivized to move students up levels to earn higher ratings.
- + All student scores will be added after weighting for performance level. The total student score after weighting will be divided over total possible points.

2. Measure of Progress Toward English Language Learner (ELL) Proficiency

- + Progress towards English Language Proficiency would be gauged by two measures: ACCESS scores (weighted for both time to proficiency and growth), and metrics that support student transition from ESL to full inclusion in general education. While ACCESS scores can be looked at in three ways (raw scores, scaled scores, and proficiency scores), progress should be determined by looking at the scaled scores. While all students are expected to grow, students who are just beginning the program would be expected to have more growth than students who have been in it for a longer period of time.

3. Measure of Student Growth for Middle and Elementary Schools: Using data from Indiana's mandated assessment, ILEARN, to assess knowledge and skills from one summative assessment (as near to the end of the year as possible) and three aligned benchmarks throughout the year.

- + **Rationale:** While proficiency is important, we must recognize and reward growth in students and cohorts. This would be done using assessment data from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) or another norm-referenced, computer-adaptive test that can assess knowledge and skills over spans of grades. Reading assessments should include an equal ratio of fiction and nonfiction passages. Other assessments should be limited and would not be included in the school ranking.
- + **Testing Funding:** The state should offer ways by which schools can incorporate growth testing without any financial barriers.
- + **Testing Requirements:** The same skills should be assessed throughout the year.
- + **Testing Time:** The summative assessment should be given in late May or early June. The benchmarks should be given three times throughout the year at the school's discretion. We are limiting it to three times

in an effort to steadfastly guard against too much testing time.

- + **Calculating Student Growth:** Baseline scores for schools will be determined by the number of students scoring Proficient. The three benchmark assessments will be used to calculate the Expected Magnitude of Growth to predict the outcome of the summative. After calculating an Expected Magnitude of Growth for each grade level, schools will calculate an Actual Magnitude of Growth. We will then average the actual magnitude of growth vs. expected magnitude of growth to calculate students' growth over time. The numbers should be weighted in several ways according to this average:

- + **Weight 1: "Advanced" Students:** Schools will receive additional points for students scoring "Advanced" in order to incentivize schools to push students who are already secure on grade level standards and because

advanced programs are often cut or overlooked in high-poverty/minority schools.

- + **Weight 2: "Basic" Students:** Schools will receive partial credit for students scoring Basic. We believe this would incentivize schools to focus on moving students who are significantly below grade level to the next band of achievement. The number of students scoring Basic is a useful indicator of progress at the school level.
- + **Weight 3: "Mobile" Students:** Our model will account for high rates of mobility in student populations because student scores will be weighted to count more when they have been at the school longer. For instance, a 5th grader who has been at the school since kindergarten should count more than a 4th grader who just arrived at the school in November of that year.

4. **Graduation Rates:** Indiana high schools will track 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year adjusted cohort graduation rates as a measure of student achievement.

NON-ACADEMIC INDICATORS OF SCHOOL QUALITY

Schools that are welcoming, safe, and learning-focused produce the strongest academic results. States will assess this through the Tier 1 indicators of attendance rates and an annual survey of students, staff, and families. Student Attendance should be the non-academic indicator used to determine the school's rating, but School Climate & Culture and Teacher Evaluation will be tracked in order for schools to determine what supports are needed.

1. **Student Attendance:** Overall in-seat school attendance rates. Attendance will be tracked according to district policies.

- + Schools will need to maintain 95 percent student attendance. Students who aren't in school aren't learning. Schools will also have to identify chronic absenteeism, which would be determined as students

who have missed ten percent of the school year or approximately 18 school days for any reason.¹ This attendance percentage is designated for non-adult schools.

- + Schools that do not meet the 95 percent requirement will create action plans in order to increase student attendance. Schools with a high percentage of

chronically absent students would need to include addressing that issue in their action plan.

2. School Climate & Culture:

- + Data provided through a survey of students, staff, and families.
- + The survey will be based on the 5 Essentials System,² developed by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, as an evidence-based approach to measuring a school's strengths and weaknesses in climate and

culture. The survey would measure school leadership, teacher collaboration, family engagement, school environment, and ambitious instruction. Schools will receive scores in these areas.

- + The school will then set annual goals around each of the five areas and create action plans as needed.

3. Teacher Evaluation: Teacher evaluation should include two components: academic and non-academic. Trained observers could be both administrators and teacher leaders. Evaluation Rubrics include but are not limited to: RISE, TAP, Danielson, and Marzano.

ACADEMIC:

- + Observations should be used to ensure high-quality instruction.
- + Teachers should receive feedback and coaching as a follow-up to each formal and informal observation.
- + Teachers and Observers should have access to all coaching and observation

data to make the observation process a continual learning experience for the teacher.

- + Student Growth Data as collected by pre- and post-test assessments.

NON-ACADEMIC: Non-academic components based on the 5Essentials Survey

- + Student Survey
- + Professionalism (solutions-oriented, positive colleague interactions)
- + Classroom Management
- + Classroom Culture/Environment

+++++ TIER 2: THE SUPPORTS +++++

The purpose of the Tier 2 Supports is to provide for comprehensive reporting of a variety of other important factors of school quality that will help drive the interventions we believe are necessary to help schools meet Tier 1 Indicators. Tier 2 Supports provide robust information on a variety of potentially predictive inputs on school quality. States, districts, and schools will be able to analyze and study their performance on these Supports and examine whether certain

factors have predictive power in learning to improve school and district performance on the Tier 1 Indicators. In this way, states will have the opportunity to identify struggling schools or subgroups and form actionable hypotheses for improving outcomes, using disciplined inquiry to drive improvement.

States will set short-term and long-term goals for Tier 2 Supports. Instead of including them in the rating system, states will use 'traffic lighting' to highlight which Supports meet important goals and which do not.

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

1. Assessments in science, civics, and additional subjects, as decided by the state, besides ELA and Mathematics.
2. STEAM programs or integrated curriculum.
3. English Language Learner integration, exiting from ELL status.
4. Student Mobility across levels over time, increased weighting for later grades in a school.

NON-ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

+ **School Climate and Culture Indicators:**

Examples include teacher leadership opportunities, teacher mentoring programs, advanced courses, anti-bullying campaigns, peer mediation programs, peer tutoring programs, celebrations of academic success, arts-integrated curriculum, music ensembles, after-school clubs, parent-led workshops, sports teams, elective courses, and library and computer lab availability.

- + **Attendance Indicators:** Interventions that have been shown to positively affect attendance rates include the following: a proactive home visit program, recognition for improved attendance, enforcement of truancy laws, and enlisting community members.

- + **Wrap-Around Services:** Schools should offer supports for students in families to increase access for families to community services. This shouldn't be limited to counselors and social workers, but could also include opportunities to help alleviate any limitations in order to increase family involvement at schools:

child health, mental and social-emotional development, family support, parent education, among others.

+ **Using Data to Drive Resource Allocation:**

Assessment data must be disaggregated by subgroup and reported to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), parents, and the public. If gaps exist, LEAs must submit a plan for how to use school or district-identified interventions to reduce inequities and increase success for identified subgroups. If needed for implementation, a request for additional funds must be submitted to the IDOE. The statewide accountability system would include IDOE auditing powers to ensure that LEAs are using any additional resources and funds for either the subgroups that are underperforming or for maintaining growth. This two-fold approach focuses on capacity-building and is targeted to ensure resources are used to improve student outcomes (i.e. success rates of underperforming subgroups and maintaining their growth).

+++++ SCHOOL RATINGS +++++

Schools would be rated as follows:

- + Exceptional
- + At or near expectations
- + In need of additional services
- + Focus school; or High-need for focused resources

+++++ CONCLUSION +++++

We believe this accountability system would serve students and their schools well because it prioritizes academic indicators without losing sight of the important role that non-academic indicators play in a school's success. We would like to teach in a state that establishes such a system because it would ensure meaningful, rich data on schools and students and we hope it would, over time, drive resources to the schools and students that need them most. Thank you for your consideration of our proposal.

The original accountability system developed by Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellows and Alumni from Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, Memphis, and Washington, D.C.: Rebecca Belleville, Clare Berke, Melissa Collins, Alex Fuentes, Chris Hofmann, Audrey Jackson, Rachel Man, Raquel Maya, Micah Miner, George Mueller, Paige Nilson, Christina Ross, Stephanie Spangler. The design was selected as one of ten best in the 2016 Thomas B. Fordham Institute's ESSA Accountability Design Competition and was the only teacher-designed accountability system among the finalists.

This document adapted by Indianapolis Teach Plus Teaching Fellows Alissa Birch, Emily Flack, Melissa Mullins, and Charity Scott, and by Teach Plus Indiana Policy Manager Elsie Owolo.