



EDUCATORS LEAD

ON ISSUES THAT MATTER
WHERE DECISIONS ARE MADE



MSEA SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PROPOSAL

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires each state to develop a school accountability system to ensure each school is providing students with a high quality education. MSEA developed the following proposal to make sure Maryland's plan—which is currently being written by MSDE—incorporates feedback from educators.

INDICATORS

MSEA identified six indicators to measure academic performance, some of which are required by ESSA:

1. **Academic Achievement:** Proficiency on the statewide math, ELA, and science assessments in a way that gives schools credit for improving student achievement at all points on the achievement scale (Elementary & Middle School)
2. **College Readiness:** Percentage of students determined to be college and career ready on the statewide math, ELA, and science assessments, or equivalent assessments (High School)
3. **Academic Engagement:** Percentage of students with attendance rates at or below 90% (All Levels); Percentage of students with attendance rates above 95% (Elementary & Middle School)
4. **Graduation Rate:** Graduation rate of most recent 4-year cohort, or an extended-year cohort as approved by the State Board of Education (High School)
5. **CTE Certificate Attainment:** Percentage of students in CTE programs who receive a certificate (High School)
6. **ELL English Proficiency:** Percentage of ELL students making adequate progress toward English proficiency within five years, as measured on ACCESS 2.0 (All Levels)

MSEA also identified five indicators that look at opportunities to learn in schools. ESSA requires at least one Opportunity to Learn indicator:

1. **School Climate:** Results of statewide school climate survey completed by students, educators, and parents (including questions on safety, discipline, parental and community engagement, and school culture)
2. **Teacher Quality:** Percentage of teachers holding advanced certification (APC, NBCT, Master's Degree Equivalent); Percentage of teachers holding advanced certification in their assigned subject areas
3. **Class and Case-Load Size:** Percentage of classes and case-loads above research-based standards for class size and case-load
4. **Learning Programs:** Access to quality pre-K for four year-olds (Elementary School); Access to advanced courses and coursework, including post-secondary opportunities in (Middle & High Schools); Percentage of students who are enrolled in related arts and/or elective courses (All Levels)
5. **Human Resources:** Number of human resource staff (School librarians, behavior interventionists, therapists, social workers, media specialist, etc.) per pupil

MSEA recommends that the state plan weigh the indicators as equally as possible to ensure each metric will be considered important in the accountability system. While ESSA requires that the Academic Performance indicators weigh much more than the Opportunity to Learn indicators, educators strongly believe that too much emphasis on test scores will continue to drive over-testing in schools—and we therefore urge the most equal distribution of weight between the two domains as possible under federal law.



Our proposal also calls for standards to be developed for each indicator along a 1-4 rubric scale. This should result in a total composite score for each school, which can then be used for identification and support.

IDENTIFICATION

In order to identify which schools should be targeted for support and improvement, as well as which schools should be recognized for high performance, our proposal includes five categories of schools (the first three are required by federal law):

1. Bottom 5% of Title I schools as based on the composite score
2. High schools that fail to graduate 67% or more of their students
3. Schools with consistently underperforming subgroups as based on the composite score
4. Bottom 10% of all schools as based on the Opportunity to Learn indicators
5. Top performing schools, to be identified by MSDE, as based on the composite score

SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT

For Identification Groups 1 and 2 above, federal law requires school districts to develop a plan to improve student outcomes in consultation with stakeholders. The plan must be informed by all indicators, include evidence-based interventions, be based on a school-level needs assessment, identify resource inequities, and be approved and monitored periodically by the state.

For Identification Group 3 above, ESSA requires the same process, but with schools developing their own plans to be approved and monitored by the district. The law also requires further action by the state if schools do not meet measurable objectives in their plans. We recommend that a policy be put in place that the state does not intervene until the fourth year, as is allowed in ESSA, to ensure local decisions have enough time to materialize before additional action.

For Identification Group 4 above, we recommend that schools conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, report to the district on progress made in addressing the concerns identified in the needs assessment, and form an advisory steering group of stakeholders to oversee the needs assessment, implementation, and progress. Districts can then decide when the schools no longer have to report progress.

To ensure true stakeholder input in improvement plans, MSEA's proposal urges that "consultation with stakeholders" include the formation of an advisory steering group—a majority of which must include non-administrator educators in the school, parents of students in the school, and students (in high schools)—to oversee the writing of the plan and measuring of progress made under the plan. We also recommend several guardrails to protect the process:

- If needed, hiring of outside consultation must be competitive (for-profit groups are prohibited)
- No changes should be made to limit or eliminate collective bargaining without appropriate bargaining
- Community input must be sought and the school must remain public
- Charter school conversion must be approved by the local school board
- The state can only intervene after the school fails to meet measurable objectives for three consecutive years, and the state cannot use any power or action to cause a district or school to adopt any specific intervention in its improvement plans
- Schools must be allowed to exit identification categories after meeting measurable objectives for three consecutive years
- Title I funding dedicated to school improvement—as required by ESSA—should be distributed to districts through a need-based formula, and then allocated to schools according to district and school plans

REPORTING AND GOALS

MSEA recommends that MSDE create reporting procedures for each school's performance on the accountability system, broken down by each indicator, in a way that explains why the school measured at a certain level on the 1-4 scale. This information should be publicly available online and mailed to each employee and parent of the school.

We also recommend that MSDE adopt intermediate and long-term goals, to be reported to the U.S. Department of Education, based on improving overall school progress on each of the indicators used in the accountability system. Opportunity to Learn indicators should be given the same priority as Academic Performance indicators. These goals should be developed together with superintendents, principals, teachers, and education support professionals, as represented by their associations, to ensure they are realistically attainable.