

Designing

DESIGNING A LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Evaluation anchors the cycle of continuous improvement, supports the shift from going in circles to spiraling upward.

— from *Improving Districts: Systems that Support Learning*¹

Components of a Local Accountability System

Accountability at the national and state levels is largely based on student assessment data and leads to rewards or sanctions for districts and schools. Local accountability systems take into account students' achievement on the national and state assessments, but these local systems are also based on feedback loops and serve a different purpose from national and state accountability systems. At the local level, student assessment information is combined with feedback from other sources and is used to make continuous improvement decisions.

All improving school systems have strong local accountability practices. In these districts, there are:

- long-range strategic plans that methodically build capacity to reach lofty yet achievable goals;
- strong and shared leadership, involving teachers in the planning and evaluation processes;
- cultures of accountability, fueled by determination and exuberance, for continuous adult and student learning; and
- two-way communication with stakeholders centered on results — celebrating successes, measuring progress towards goals, and feeding into decisions about next steps for improving teaching and learning.

In this model, accountability is ultimately about personal responsibility and excellence — it is about doing one's job well. School board members, district administrators, union representatives, principals, teachers, and classified

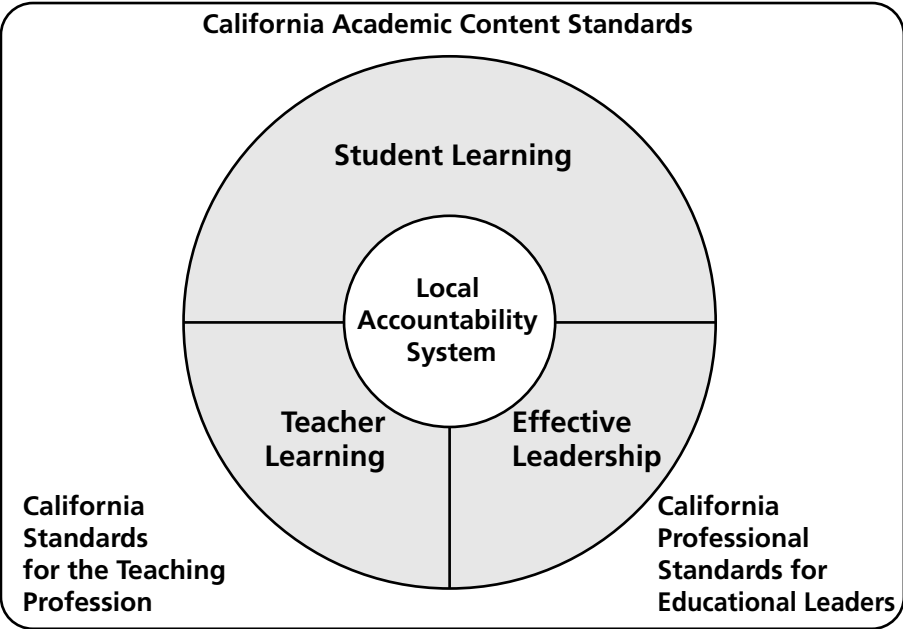
personnel each need feedback on how students are achieving, how programs are operating, and how much progress is being made on their individual and organizational improvement goals.

This Web page presents a model for local accountability within California’s standards-based education context. This model can work for any school district, regardless of size and location. Districts need to understand this model and then customize it in order to implement an accountability system that will lead to improved results for all.

Educational leaders collect a broad range of data to compare current practice to standards, to establish goals, and to measure progress toward benchmarks. The key steps in collecting, analyzing, and using these data are presented for three areas — **Student Learning**, **Teacher Learning**, and **Effective Leadership**. Each category is guided by a set of standards. This discussion is based on interviews and research into the existing practices in California school districts and extends into a vision for exemplary practice.

The following graphic illustrates the basic elements of a local accountability system:

STANDARDS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY
Comparing Practice to Standards



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Student Learning — California Academic Content Standards

(www.cde.ca.gov/standards)

This is the bottom line — how students are progressing on the California Academic Content Standards. Schools and districts need to track each student’s progress on multiple measures of achievement, including the progress of English learners and special education students. Other indicators about the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to standards should also be tracked.

Examples of Indicators:

- percentage of students who are proficient on reading comprehension standards
- percentage of students scoring proficient on curriculum-embedded assessments
- student attendance
- graduation rate of the 9th grade cohort
- English learner re-designation rate
- percentage of students who adequately explain key standards and performance levels during the principal’s walk-throughs

Teacher Learning — California Standards for the Teaching Profession

(www.btsa.ca.gov/ba/pubs/pdf/cstpreport.pdf)

A local accountability system should provide information about the quality of teaching and how to improve in this vital area. It is critical for teachers to have the opportunity to develop as professionals, to measure their progress, and to evaluate and improve the system of professional development.

Examples of Indicators:

- percentage of fully credentialed teachers
- teacher stability/mobility
- percentage of teachers who rate themselves as proficient on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)
- percentage of teachers meeting the standard on CSTP-based performance evaluations

- percentage of teachers applying new knowledge and skills in the classroom based on professional development offered

Effective Leadership —
California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders
 (www.csla.org/csla/standards/default.html)

Leadership is critical within schools and districts. An evaluation and feedback system should inform administrators about how to improve their leadership and district and school culture. Within local accountability systems, educational leaders must provide the necessary guidance, training, and support to ensure that teachers, working within a collaborative school culture, are able to use data to inform instructional and schoolwide decisions.

Examples of Indicators:

- percentage of administrators who rate themselves as proficient on the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs)
- percentage of students who rate a sense of belonging to the school
- percentage of staff who rate the school as a proficient learning organization

Getting Started

A comprehensive accountability system requires collecting a variety of data and using the data to inform decisions about student learning needs, individual professional growth, and the implementation of district and school programs.

Below is a recommended process for getting started:

1. Develop a descriptive statement of what the state and local assessment data say about student achievement.
 - Which results are particularly low or high?
 - Are there significant achievement gaps between groups of students?
 - What progress has been made from one year to the next?
 - What important patterns emerge (across years, grade levels, subject areas, student groups, local versus state tests)?
2. Select an area in which students most need to improve and identify the content standards in that specific area.

3. Explore and reach consensus on the chief causal factors that likely influenced student achievement results. Focus on factors over which staff have control, such as classroom teaching, school interventions, family/school partnerships, professional development, and the quality of school climate.
4. Explore alternatives and reach an agreement on the best feasible solution to the identified problem. Solutions should be a combination of related actions that address priority content standards, such as improving high quality reading instruction in all classrooms, accelerating school interventions that are aligned with classroom practices, and assigning weekly book bags and reading calendars for home reading.
5. State student learning goals, select indicators of growth, and establish benchmarks or targets to reach at key points in time. Also, determine teacher learning goals related to the student learning goals and goals for effective leadership.
6. Develop or select appropriate assessment and evaluation strategies. For example, this document discusses each of the following strategies:
 - **Student learning** (link to this section)
 - o collecting and analyzing student achievement data
 - o collecting information about the alignment of curriculum and instruction to standards
 - o collecting information about the quality of assessments
 - **Teacher learning** (link to this section)
 - o using teacher self-assessments based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) corroborated by external ratings from principals and coaches
 - o evaluating the quality of professional development and the level of implementation of new teaching practices
 - o using CSTP-based performance evaluations
 - **Effective leadership** (link to this section)
 - o developing and using administrator self-assessments based on the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs)
 - o surveying stakeholders — students, parents, staff, and community — about school climate

- o evaluating school and district culture
 - o collecting information about the usefulness of the accountability system
7. Create, disseminate, and discuss accountability reports periodically, each quarter or trimester, and at the end of each year. Combine quantitative results with narratives about particular successes and disappointments.
 8. Link results from one report to the next. Link planned actions in one report to data on actual implementation in the next. Examine patterns and growth in the results and develop a roadmap for ongoing improvement in leadership, teaching, and student learning. Use the accountability process within a collaborative and supportive culture to improve leadership, teaching, and learning, not to blame individuals.

Student Learning

For students to make progress on meeting the standards, the district and school must have a clearly articulated map for learning. Curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting should all be aligned to standards. The key steps in a system of accountability for student learning are:

1. Identify content standards and priority standards.
2. Collect and analyze student achievement data.
3. Evaluate the alignment of curriculum and instruction to standards.
4. Evaluate the quality of assessments.
5. Use data for decision-making.
6. Report results.

Each of these steps is explained below.

1. Identify content standards and priority standards.

Content Standards

www.cde.ca.gov/standards

Content standards, in conjunction with performance standards, specify the concepts and skills a student is expected to learn at each grade level. Because they

provide a common language, standards lead to better communication about how students are achieving and what proficient work looks like. When students, teachers, and parents have a common language to discuss standards and student work, and the time and guidance to collaborate around results, they may find that their current expectations are too low. Implementing state standards — or district standards that align to the state standards in terms of breadth and rigor — has led in some districts to a more demanding curriculum and higher expectations for all students.

Recently adopted textbooks in California organize content by the state standards. Without standards-aligned textbooks, a school or district must reorganize materials to reference the standards.

All students are expected to meet challenging standards for their grade level, but a limited number of students may need different standards. For example, for special education students with severe disabilities who are enrolled in a life skills program, appropriate content standards might be the objectives stated in each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

California has also adopted the **English Language Development (ELD) Standards** (www.cde.ca.gov/standards/eld.pdf) for English learners. ELD instruction builds English learners' literacy and fluency so they can comprehend instruction on reading/language arts standards as well as standards in other subject areas. The accountability system must monitor English learners' progress on meeting these standards.

The relationship between ELD and reading/language arts standards is shown in *A Map for Teaching and Assessing California's English Language Development and English Language Arts Standards for English Learners*.² This map clusters related ELD and reading/language arts standards side-by-side. In some instances, the Advanced ELD standard is exactly the same wording as a reading/language arts standard.

Priority Standards

To design a local accountability system, it is important to identify “priority” standards (also called key standards, target standards,³ power standards, essential standards, common core standards, quintessential standards, etc.). These are the most enduring standards, and critical for student success. In California, the strands and sub-strands of the reading/language arts standards provide one way to define a priority standard. These strands and sub-strands are general to many or all grade levels and help to provide focus to teachers as they work across grade levels.

For local accountability purposes, select only a few “priority standards” per year (fewer for schools or districts just beginning to develop a standards-based accountability system.) The selection should be based on what standards are most in need of improvement and most critical to students’ success.

This is not to say that teachers should ignore other standards or limit their instruction only to these priority standards. Developing and maintaining a focus for accountability will make the system manageable, and will allow for meaningful results to be generated and used.

2. Collect and analyze student achievement data.

Standards-Based Assessments

In a local accountability system, data from state assessments should be combined with data from local standards-based assessments, which may have a variety of formats:

- *Multi-item assessments* measure students’ understanding of a broad range of the curriculum (e.g., multiple-choice, short-answer, true/false).
- *Performance assessments* require students to construct responses to one or more complex tasks, rather than select from response options. Performance assessments should target the priority standards, skills that are not well suited to measurement by multiple-choice items, or standards most in need of improvement.

Performance assessments are scored using scoring guides, also called rubrics. Scoring guides describe what performance looks like at each achievement level.⁴ Examples of student work at each performance level may accompany the guide to help teachers, students, and parents better understand the performance level. Examples also increase the consistency among raters.

- *Curriculum-embedded assessments* may be either multi-item or performance assessments. They are particularly important at the local level because they are the basis for teacher collaboration and schoolwide dialogue about student achievement. Agreeing on common assessment strategies is critical for developing a school that is focused on continuous improvement.⁵ A district can provide leadership by providing a common pool of questions and common performance standards. Encouraging teachers to draw upon this pool, rather than every teacher designing his or her own test, will help establish a common language for talking about student performance.

The California curriculum frameworks recommend assessing students before (entry), during (formative or progress monitoring), and after (summative) instruction. Local accountability systems should be based on summative assessments that are given at the end of six- to eight-week instructional cycles, quarters, or trimesters, depending on local assessment and reporting patterns.

Performance Levels and Performance Standards

A standards-based assessment measures one or more content standards and yields a score against benchmarks of student work, called *performance levels*. A performance-level score is in contrast to a norm-referenced score that compares a student to other students. California adopted five performance levels: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. In California's system, the proficient level is equivalent to "meeting the standard."

For each assessment, the range of possible scores must be divided into performance levels by the number or percentage of items correct or by using rubrics or scoring guides for performance tasks to show criteria for each level of performance.

Scores based on performance levels can be used to:

- monitor student progress,
- assign students far below proficiency (at risk of retention) to interventions that have the potential to accelerate the student to the proficient level, and
- build consistency and accuracy across teachers in the district's grading system and common understandings about what it means to meet the standard.

A selected group of teachers and assessment specialists should define performance levels for the priority standards, then designate one of the levels as the "Performance Standard," or the level at which a student has achieved proficiency. It is important for teachers in various grade levels and subject areas to develop common understandings of what proficient performance is on any standard.

Performance levels can be used to combine the results of several measures of student learning. To combine scores from different assessments, convert scores on each assessment to performance levels. For example, any score from 16 to 19 on a 20-point true/false test would be at the proficient level, and so would any score from 52 to 60 (with no "advanced responses") on a 60-point test that includes multiple-choice and constructed-response items.

Once converted to performance levels, the results from different assessments should be organized and presented in a chart similar to the one below.⁶ Such a chart can be used by school teams and by school and district administrators to assess whether the school and district have met their accountability target. For example, if the district goal for the year is for 60 percent of students to achieve proficiency on its priority standards, the chart can provide an organized way to show whether the district has met its target for all students and for each group of students. If targets are met, then it is an occasion for celebration and reward. If targets are not met, the district should enter back into an evaluative feedback system to determine the causes of unexpected low performance.

SAMPLE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT FOR A SCHOOL OR DISTRICT

District or School Name		Reading/Language Arts or Mathematics Assessments percent at/above the standard		
Grade or Grade Span	Students — disaggregate by student groups	SAT 9 — California Standards Test (to be replaced by the California Achievement Test)	Multi-Item Standards Based Assessment (e.g., curriculum-embedded assessments)	Performance Assessment (indicate specific assessment and "priority" standards assessed)
	All			
	EL	(Note if using a different test)		
	Special Ed	(Note if using a different test)		
	Group #1			
	Group #2, etc.			
	All			
	EL			
	Special Ed			
	Group #1			
	Group #2, etc.			

For mid-size and large school districts, it will be critical to have a computer database and software that will help to organize and present information about student learning, as well as other accountability information.

3. Evaluate the alignment of curriculum and instruction to standards.

It is important to evaluate the alignment of curriculum and instruction to standards, particularly when student achievement goals are not being met. Doing so will help to assess the level of implementation of planned activities. A district should use information about alignment, in combination with student achievement data, to identify areas of program improvement that will lead to better student results.

Information about alignment that a district can collect includes:

- percentage of teachers with key reading and writing standards posted in student-friendly language in their classrooms,
- percentage of teachers who implement core instructional practices at a proficient level,
- positive ratings by a district team on a checklist about whether classroom practices are aligned with interventions, and
- percentage of teachers who believe that assessment results are timely and provide useful information for lesson planning and school program evaluation.

To collect such data, a range of strategies can be used, including formal reviews, walk-throughs, classroom observations, self-assessments, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Below are examples some approaches that districts have taken:

- In year one, a panel evaluates a school's implementation of content standards by observing if standards are posted, teachers are targeting the standards in their lessons, and students are aware of the standards. If a school is not making adequate progress, the district intervenes by assigning as coaches a panel of administrators and teachers from schools that are achieving meaningful progress. In the second year, the principal and coaches review classroom lessons twice during the year to provide feedback to teachers. The panel also evaluates the level of focus on priority standards in the school's intervention program.
- A district panel of special education administrators and teachers uses a scoring guide to rate the appropriateness and coverage of standards listed in a sample of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for a school. A schedule designates how often a school's IEPs will be reviewed — annually for schools rated at the lowest performance level and progressively less often for higher performance ratings.

- Teachers are given an opportunity to evaluate annually a Curriculum Guide — a binder for each grade level that identifies standards to be covered, a flexible pacing schedule for each trimester, district assessments, followed by sample student work showing proficient performance. Similarly, parents annually evaluate the usefulness of a Parent Guide that highlights the priority standards. Feedback is used to improve the guides each year.
- Teachers use a scoring guide to rate their own implementation level at the beginning and end of the school year. Results of teacher self-assessments and administrator walk-throughs are included in a year-end accountability report.
- The county office of education periodically facilitates meetings for district representatives to share their work, using a protocol that invites critical feedback. A panel reviews the key standards and samples of teachers' standards-based lesson plans and gives suggestions for improvement.
- The district administrator regularly communicates with parents and community members about the standards initiative and successes in implementation. Parents are invited to give feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Three-person teams conduct school visits to judge teachers' use of core instructional strategies. A classroom observation checklist is used to rate how well lessons address the standards and what site-specific strategies are being used. Students are interviewed to determine their awareness of the key standards. Each school receives a summary report of findings as part of the school accountability process.
- Teachers annually self-rate their own performance on core instructional strategies using a five-level scoring guide. Results are used internally by the school only. Teachers' self-perception data may be compared to the observers' data, with corroboration giving more confidence in the results.
- Classroom walk-throughs by an administrator soon after professional development sessions serves both as follow-up professional development and as evaluation. The administrator uses an observation checklist to rate implementation of core strategies. Results summarizing schoolwide implementation are included in trimester accountability reports.

4. Evaluate the quality of assessments.

A local accountability system requires *multiple measures* of student learning to accurately measure achievement. Many measurement experts agree that one assessment instrument rarely is accurate for all students and rarely meets all

possible purposes (for example, individual diagnosis, progress compared to performance standards, program evaluation, and state accountability). Sometimes a single assessment instrument is accurate but needs to be administered more than once to ensure a true score for each student (e.g., a student did not sleep well and under-performed).

When two or more different sources of data arrive at the same conclusion, one may be more confident that the results are accurate. Just as instruction must be differentiated to meet all students' needs, assessment also must be done multiple times and in a variety of ways to be valid and fair.

Below are some examples of how districts evaluate the quality of local assessments:

- The district's Accountability Department staff and two external experts evaluate local assessment instruments and administration and scoring procedures in terms of validity, consistency, equity, credibility, and meaningfulness.⁷
- District assessments are adopted or adapted from sources that have established their validity and reliability, so there is no need for a local evaluation of the instruments. A county expert in assessment reviews the district's administration and scoring procedures. Rater agreement is checked for performance assessments on which teachers must rate student work. Inter-rater consistency should be at least 70 percent (within one score point).
- One and two years after initiating an assessment, teachers are surveyed about its usefulness for making decisions about student progress on standards; school leadership teams are surveyed about the assessment's usefulness for making program decisions. The district uses this information to improve assessments or to increase support in using the results of the assessments.
- The superintendent and teacher representatives attend a work session at the county office of education to evaluate the quality of the district reading assessments. They present the instruments, administration procedures with accommodations for English learners and special education students, scoring procedures to ensure accuracy of student achievement and consistency across teachers. Formal ratings from the county panel result in suggestions for improvement.

5. Use data for decision-making.

Once data are collected and organized, the next step is to use the data to guide decision-making. Teachers will use classroom assessment information daily and

weekly to identify what has been learned and to plan the next step in each student's education. Detailed diagnostic information helps the teacher tailor lessons to individual student needs and to develop subgroup strategies.⁸

Periodic conversations in grade-level teams or subject area departments about assessment results and next steps for instruction are crucial within high quality accountability systems. These meetings are focused on looking at the percentage of students at each performance level, then identifying common lessons and teaching strategies that will raise the achievement level of students, particularly those who are far below proficiency.

Staff meetings each quarter or trimester should be centered on analyzing performance level data for all grades. These results should be used to make decisions about the effectiveness of a school's comprehensive instructional program and lead to revisions in expectations for proficient performance.

Although quite complex, a comprehensive school instructional program can be thought of as an integrated set of three strategies:

- **Core instructional strategies** used regularly throughout a school, or at least appropriate grade spans in an elementary school or departments in a secondary school. Common strategies encourage teachers to collaborate and provide continuity as students advance in grades. Core strategies across schools make education seamless for students who frequently move within a district. Establishing core strategies does not mean teaching one way to all students. Instructional strategies should be research-based and differentiated to meet the needs of diverse learners including English learners and students with learning disabilities.
- **School intervention strategies** that supplement classroom instruction for students who need extra help to accelerate learning. Some students may only need moderate or "strategic" interventions such as small group tutoring a few days each week to reach proficiency. Other students may need intensive interventions such as one-to-one professional tutoring every day.
- **Home-school strategies** to engage parents/guardians and the community in partnership with the school. Schools and the district build strong home-school partnership strategies by respecting parents/guardians as partners and communicating information clearly, encouraging feedback and involvement, and providing parent education services. Research suggests certain practical actions that all parents/guardians can take to help their children be successful learners, regardless of the parents'/guardians' literacy skills.⁹

The following is a general paradigm for how performance levels may link to decisions about the quality of the school's comprehensive instructional program:¹⁰

Performance Level	Description	Program Decisions
Advanced	A large percentage of students showing an understanding of standards above grade level or advanced understanding of grade-level standards	An enriched program (e.g., enriched and challenging classroom curriculum, GATE, AP) has been successful.
Proficient	A large percentage of students showing understanding of the priority standards and all or most of the lower priority standards	The comprehensive instructional program is strong (e.g., good first teaching, well-timed interventions, partnerships with family and community).
Basic	A large percentage of students showing understanding of many of the priority standards	There are both strengths and weaknesses in the comprehensive program. It may be necessary to improve first teaching of some of the standards, develop school interventions, or improve family/community partnerships.
Below Basic	A large percentage of students showing understanding of some of the priority standards or partial understanding of standards	There are significant gaps in the comprehensive program. Indicates the need for improved first teaching, moderate interventions (e.g., small group tutorial sessions coordinated with classroom work), and improved family/community partnerships.
Far Below Basic	A large percentage of students showing understanding of few or none of the standards or minimal understanding of the standards	The comprehensive program is struggling. Indicates the need for improved first teaching, intensive interventions (e.g., one-on-one daily tutorials coordinated with classroom work), and improved family/community partnerships.

Based on an analysis of the data, staff may focus on developing schoolwide core instructional practices, designing appropriate intervention strategies, or establishing home-school partnerships. Similarly, district staff may analyze these same data for all schools to establish districtwide policy and to make program decisions.

6. Report results.

A local accountability system must include a plan for reporting and using results about student learning. There are four basic types of reports that focus on improving student learning:

- **Individual test data:** Test information about an individual student is reported to the teacher, student, and parent or guardian. Feedback allows these individuals to recognize what has been learned and to plan the next step in the student's education. Detailed diagnostic information helps the teacher tailor lessons to individual student needs and make decisions about promotion, retention, or special instructional programs for individual students.
- **Standards-based report card:** The report card is for individual students and their parents/guardians, not the general public. It should communicate summary results to students and their parents/guardians clearly and consistently and truly reflect achievement of the standards. Districts that have developed "standards-based" report cards have taken a variety of approaches. For instance, some report performance levels for many or all of the state standards, while others report performance levels for the priority standards, such as reading comprehension, and list the specific standards underneath. Some compare student performance to trimester/quarterly expectations, while others compare student achievement to year-end expectations or performance standards.
- **Group test summaries:** Group test results are reported to teams, committees, funding sources, and the public as evidence of impact on student learning. Group test summaries are particularly valuable for assessing gaps in achievement between different groups of students. Group results in a standards-based system typically are in the form of percentage of students at performance levels. Results are plotted over time to indicate progress. To ensure reliability, districts should evaluate whether changes are due to the instructional program or changes in the student population. Ideally, matched student analysis can be used.
- **Summary data on the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to standards and on the quality of assessments:** The results of

surveys, questionnaires, walk-throughs, classroom observations and other evaluation strategies should be presented as group results identifying responses by percentage or number achieving satisfactory rating. These results are reported to school leadership teams, committees, and the school board as evidence of implementation of planned activities. These process results should be linked to student achievement data to identify what is working and what needs further improvement.

At a minimum, data reports should clearly compare local assessment data to state test data to identify similarities and discrepancies. Data should be generated based on the district and school strategic goals, and reported in terms of growth on selected indicators. That is, the most essential accountability question is: Did the district/school meet the student achievement growth targets stated in the goals?

Data reports should be user-friendly, presenting important data in a structure that allows readers to easily understand and make instructional decisions about individuals or groups of students. It can be easy to generate so much data that the results are cumbersome and unusable. Determine what level of detail will be most useful to your audience and target reports to this level.

Using results involves team learning at the individual, school, and district levels. District and school leaders must provide ample, ongoing professional development and support services on analyzing data and using results to make good decisions.

Indicators of Student Learning

In designing a district strategic plan, select a group of goals and indicators that will focus the local accountability system. The selected indicators should target areas most in need of improvement and should be the result of broad consensus among stakeholders. These indicators become the basis for selecting and designing local assessment and evaluation strategies that are a central feature of a local accountability system.

Below are examples of indicators. Some are direct indicators of achievement, while others, such as student attendance, may indicate a necessary pre-condition for learning. A wide range of sample indicators for student outcomes and school and district processes can be found in *Accountability in Action* by Douglas Reeves.¹¹

SAMPLE INDICATORS

- SAT 9 and the California Standards Test — to be replaced in 2003 by the California Achievement Test (CAT) and the California Standards Test
- California English Language Development Test (CELDT)
- percentage of students reaching proficient on district assessments
- percentage of students reaching proficient on curriculum-embedded assessments in six- to eight-week cycles
- student attendance and mobility
- graduation rate of the 9th grade cohort
- English learner re-designation rate and academic achievement after re-designation
- measures of closing the achievement gap between groups of students
- percentage of kindergarten students who have participated in pre-school

Teacher Learning

“We have to think about accountability in a very different way... We have done a splendid job of holding nine-year olds accountable. Let me suggest as a moral principle that we dare not hold kids any more accountable than we expect to hold ourselves.”

— Douglas B. Reeves¹²

Every student deserves an effective teacher, and local accountability systems should take into account this critical dimension of education. Teachers know their preparation and skill is at the heart of the educational process. Research also has shown that “good teaching matters.”¹³ It is true that other factors beyond the classroom walls are important, but no factor approaches the impact that a high quality teacher can have on student learning.

Teachers in California are called upon to integrate knowledge of the content standards with an array of instructional strategies while meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Expanding content knowledge, learning the most effective instructional strategies, adapting to standards-based curriculum materials, acquiring an understanding of students’ individual and cultural learning needs, inquiring into one’s own practice, creating collaborative

communities based on common practices — all are at the heart of effective professional development and improving teaching and learning. The profession of teaching takes years to reach mastery and requires lifelong learning to remain current and to increase effectiveness with all students.

California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)

Although districts are not required to adopt the CSTP or to align personnel evaluation to these teaching standards, it is highly recommended that the CSTP be used to plan professional development, guide personnel evaluation of teachers, and structure teachers' self-assessments. Just as student content standards provide a basis for aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the teaching standards provide a basis for aligning professional development, support, and supervision.

According to the CSTP, teachers play a critical role in implementing local accountability systems. Among other competencies described in the CSTP, teachers must:

- establish and communicate learning goals for all students,
- collect and use multiple sources of information to assess student learning,
- use the results of assessments to guide instruction,
- communicate with students, families, and other audiences about student progress,
- reflect on teaching practice and plan professional development,
- establish professional goals and pursue opportunities to grow professionally, and
- work with colleagues, families, and the community to improve professional practice.

Some districts may go beyond the CSTP to the mastery standards for teaching defined by the **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards** (www.nbpts.org or www.cde.ca.gov/pd/nbpts/index.html for National Board Certification in California). These standards describe exemplary teaching practice within specific subject areas and grade spans.

The key steps in developing a system of accountability for teacher learning are:

1. Develop goals for professional development based on student learning needs.
2. Identify areas of teacher need based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.
3. Ensure that professional development is of high quality.
4. Evaluate the success of implementation.
5. Make continuous improvement decisions.
6. Report results.

Each of these steps is explained below.

1. Develop goals for professional development based on student learning needs.

Once the goals for student learning have been identified, the next step is to discover how to design professional development that will support teachers in reaching those goals. Professional development based solely on personal interest is not strategic or focused enough. A local accountability system requires — and can help foster — alignment of goals.

2. Identify areas of teacher need based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)

(www.btsa.ca.gov/ba/pubs/pdf/cstpreport.pdf)

Early in a school year, teachers should assess their own practice in relation to criteria in the CSTP. These self-perception ratings should be corroborated with external observation ratings from the principal or school coach. The teacher self-reflection builds internal accountability and personal mastery.¹⁴ The external ratings add reliability to the results. Professional development goals should be refined based on these results and the identified student learning needs in order to take into account different levels of experience and skill (e.g., the needs of an emergency permit teacher will obviously vary dramatically from the needs of a 15-year veteran).

For teachers to make progress on the CSTP, the district must have a comprehensive plan to support teacher learning. This professional development plan — based on the idea of continuous learning — may be thought of as a “continuum” from recruitment, to pre-service, to induction, to ongoing professional development for mid-career teachers, including teacher leadership

roles, and finally to instructional leadership for those whose careers lead into administration. A commitment to professional standards, coaching, and collegial reflection and inquiry should be consistent throughout all stages of the continuum.¹⁵

3. Ensure that professional development is of high quality.

One research study showed that only 10 percent of teachers implement practices that were introduced by the traditional approach of a full-day awareness workshop with no follow-up support or accountability.¹⁶ Many educators will recall their frustration with these one-shot in-services, isolation in the classroom, inadequate time for collaboration, and few opportunities for teacher leadership.

California has published *Designs for Learning*, a research-based framework,¹⁷ to provide guidance in developing a learning organization that improves student achievement. *Designs for Learning* (www.cde.ca.gov/pd/pdf/designsintro.pdf) is organized around ten “Design Elements,” or interlocking qualities of effective professional development. These design elements are contrasted with less effective practices in the chart on the next page.¹⁸

Design elements for high quality professional development	Less effective practices
1. Student Data. Uses student performance and achievement data, including student feedback, teacher observation, analysis of student work and test scores, as part of the process for individual and organizational learning.	There are few opportunities to collectively analyze student work or other data. Schools receive no technical assistance in using and understanding data. Someone outside of the school makes decisions about teachers' professional development needs.
2. Planning. Uses a coherent, long-term professional development planning process connected to the school plan, which reflects both site-based priorities and individual learning needs.	There are multiple school plans and planning processes. Teachers' professional development is not related to long-range learning goals but is based on perceived needs, demands, or opportunities.
3. Time. Provides time for professional learning to occur in a meaningful manner.	Professional development takes place on teachers' own time. Other than three to five districtwide days, teachers' professional time is limited to brief logistical meetings before, during, or after school.
4. Leadership. Respects and encourages the leadership development of teachers.	Few rewards or incentives demonstrate to teachers that the district or school values their leadership. Leadership roles are an add-on to full-time teaching responsibilities. Taking a leadership role may mean "breaking rank."
5. Content and Pedagogy. Develops, refines, and expands teachers' pedagogical repertoire, content knowledge, and the skill to integrate both.	Teacher in-service is limited to training presentations by outside experts and focuses on topics those experts have chosen. Professional development in the content area changes yearly. No system for coaching and peer collaboration about classroom practice exists. Teachers' observing one another is valued, but no resources or support are provided.
6. Inquiry. Provides for and promotes continuous inquiry and reflection.	Professional development is episodic and not sustained over time. Inquiry, whether it is action research or data collection and analysis, is considered a private matter. Inquiry is not built into any regular process at the school.
7. Collaboration. Provides for collaboration and collegial work, balanced with opportunities for individual learning.	Teaching is still viewed as an isolated activity. Teachers have to defend their time working together to the administration, the community, and policymakers. When they do have time to develop a vision and goals, staff may not have time to integrate these goals into teaching practice or to address possible conflicts, biases, or assumptions that may negatively affect student learning.
8. Adult Learning. Follows the principles of good teaching and learning, including providing comfortable, respectful environments conducive to adult learning.	Professional development is organized without staff input and according to a single learning model. Often, the intended outcomes are unclear. Teachers and administrators are expected to apply the material presented without examples or follow-up support. These settings are often uncomfortable for adults.
9. Support. Creates broad-based support of professional development from all sectors of the organization and community through reciprocal processes for providing information and soliciting feedback.	The community is not informed about the professional development goals or involved in planning. Sessions are held with one or two days notice. Stakeholders are notified, but no other contact is made.
10. Accountability. Builds in accountability practices and evaluation of professional development programs to provide a foundation for future planning.	Professional development is evaluated on teacher satisfaction instead of its impact upon student achievement. Professional development resources are allocated based on policy priorities or state testing with little formal evaluation or local input.

The design elements provide ideas for how to develop a comprehensive professional development program that will increase teacher efficacy and improve student learning.

4. Evaluate the success of implementation.

To gather evidence on what participants have learned as a result of professional development, identify the indicators of successful learning (i.e., the knowledge and understanding, skills, or attitudes and beliefs being taught), design a tool or process by which participants can demonstrate their learning, and collect the information.¹⁹ Tools or processes may include questionnaires, oral or written reflections, portfolios, simulations, and/or demonstrations. The evaluation forms and criteria should be based on the CSTP.

The real test comes later, when teachers try to apply new learning in the classroom. This is the most important time to evaluate teacher progress. The best information may be gained through direct and unobtrusive observations by principals and coaches in the weeks and months following a professional development session or series. These observations also may be used to assign follow-up coaching for teachers who need additional implementation support.

Other strategies include follow-up questionnaires, teacher self-assessments of change, structured interviews, videotapes, portfolios, or written reflections. Evaluation forms can combine quantitative ratings with places for more open-ended responses. To show improvement, use pre-post measures, select comparison groups, or generate results over a number of years.

Implementing new classroom strategies may be dependent on support from within an organization and an ability to change old practices and programs that may be out of alignment with new goals. If barriers to implementation exist within a district and school, it may be helpful to develop a questionnaire, focus group, or structured interview that inquires into the recognition and support of new goals.

Professional development, especially when it is targeted to priority standards and precise student learning goals, ultimately should be evaluated by assessing progress in student achievement. For more information, see the *Student Learning* section of this document.

Personnel Evaluation

For the sake of common standards and system coherence, formal personnel evaluations should be aligned to the CSTP. Formal observations can also be

compared to insights gained from interviews and teacher self-assessments of progress on meeting the standards.

5. Make continuous improvement decisions.

In order to inform continuous improvement decisions, evaluations of teacher learning should be reported in terms of developmental levels on the CSTP, just as students' achievement should be reported in terms of performance levels.

Teachers' developmental levels do not necessarily correspond to how long each teacher has been teaching or to certification levels. Teachers may be at one level for the standard on classroom management and at another level on the standard for planning and designing instruction. Even excellent teachers are still improving in some areas of their practice.

The following developmental levels, described in *A Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities*,²⁰ provide a common language for discussing specific professional development goals and results:

A DEVELOPMENTAL CONTINUUM OF TEACHER ABILITIES

Developmental Level	Description	Decisions about Professional Development
Beginning	Teacher relies on ongoing assistance from more experienced colleagues for support, guidance, and survival, and is trying to internalize and apply what she or he has learned about teaching.	A large percent of teachers at this level suggests a need for a stronger system for developing mentors and coaches and assigning them to offer intensive classroom support to beginning teachers.
Emerging	Teacher still relies on more experienced colleagues for support but is moving toward becoming more self-directed and independent in her or his practice.	A large percent of teachers at this level suggests a need to assign coaches to work regularly with beginning teachers or other teachers who are implementing new practices.
Applying	Teacher is able to teach independently, internalizes and easily applies what she or he has learned about teaching.	A large percent of teachers at this level suggests a strong professional development program. Teachers continue to inquire into classroom practice and to develop and show mastery, such as through National Board Certification. Teachers need opportunities to engage in teacher leadership roles within the school and professional community.
Integrating	Teacher is fully skilled, confident, and able to integrate complex elements of instruction, curriculum, and professional development into practice. The integrating teacher moves beyond the classroom in her or his teaching, collegial relationships, and professional growth activities and is often a leader among peers.	A large percent of teachers at this level suggests a need for ongoing and regular collaboration among teachers in grade-level teams and subject area departments. Opportunities for coaching may help to extend learning.

A DEVELOPMENTAL CONTINUUM OF TEACHER ABILITIES (*continued*)

Developmental Level	Description	Decisions about Professional Development
Innovating	The teacher is consistently innovating and creating in all areas of teaching and professional development. A leader in school, district, and local community, the innovating teacher contributes to the broader education community through staff development, classroom-based research, articles in professional journals, etc.	A large percent of teachers at this level indicates a very successful professional development system.

6. Report results.

Individual evaluation results should be given to teachers and used within a collegial, supportive setting, such as a peer coaching relationship with a colleague or administrator. The evaluation results should be used to guide individual professional growth.

Group results should be used to examine school program effectiveness. Generally, the results of surveys, questionnaires, walk-throughs, classroom observations, and other evaluation strategies should be presented as group results. For each specific professional development goal, evaluations of classroom practice should be reported in terms of the number or percentage of teachers at different developmental levels. These results should be reported to decision-makers, school leadership teams, committees, program developers, and teachers. These results will help to guide decisions about future professional development and the implementation of school programs.

As with student achievement data, reports should be user-friendly, presenting important data in a structure that allows readers to easily understand and make decisions about how professional development is helping to improve teacher quality and student learning.

Personnel evaluations must remain confidential as described by local bargaining policies. Some districts have inserted accountability for implementing particular practices and improving student learning into their personnel evaluations for administrators and sometimes also for teachers.

Summary results should be included in the district and school accountability reports. These results should be associated with student achievement to encourage decisions about teaching practices to improve student learning.

Indicators of Teacher Learning

Data such as the percentage of teachers who are fully credentialed or the rate of teacher stability/mobility are proxies for teacher effectiveness. In fact, owning a credential and staying in one school for many years are no sure indication that a teacher is making continuous improvement. However, research has shown that of all the school-based factors, teacher qualifications (such as credential status and years of experience) are the biggest determinants of student success. While acknowledging the talent and dedication of many interns, pre-interns, and teachers on emergency permits who are working in California schools, it is important also to acknowledge that, in general, schools with large numbers of under-prepared teachers are not as effective. According to a study by Kati Haycock,²¹ a school with more than 20 percent of its teachers under-prepared loses its ability to advance the learning of students. For under-prepared teachers, districts should accelerate or support their full preparation, provide intensive coaching, emphasize teacher recruitment, or develop other strategies.

SAMPLE INDICATORS

- percentage of teachers fully credentialed
- rate of teacher stability/mobility and exit interview information about reasons for leaving the school, district, or profession
- percentage of teachers with CLAD/BCLAD certification
- percentage of teachers or total number of National Board Certified Teachers
- other locally selected indicators (e.g., percent bilingual)
- percentage of teachers who give at least satisfactory ratings on a self-assessment derived from the California Standards for the Teaching Profession
- percentage of teachers who give at least satisfactory ratings on important characteristics of professional development in four areas:
 - opportunities for individual and team learning
 - practical application in the classroom
 - thematic connection among a series of sessions
 - follow-up support services (e.g., coaching in classrooms)
- percentage of workshop participants who consistently apply professional development concepts and skills at their work sites
- percentage of teachers who rate each professional development session as at least satisfactory in terms of clarity of content and value to teaching

- percentage of teachers who are satisfied with follow-up support and their level of implementation

Effective Leadership

“Leaders are uniquely positioned to ensure that amid the busyness and bombardment that all organizations endure, the dream remains central. Leaders nourish the dream by keeping each person fully aware of an organization’s purpose and goals. Individuals also need to know that, without a doubt, their efforts contribute meaningfully to the purpose and goals. By providing brief but regular occasions to observe, recognize, celebrate, and reward meaningful accomplishments, leaders can create a field of dreams where progress and appreciation prevail.”

— Mike Schmoker²²

District and school leaders are responsible for implementing local accountability systems. Leaders ensure that all students are served fairly and given every opportunity to learn. Leaders also establish a human environment in which the adults are willing to be learners, take risks, and assume responsibility.

In establishing an accountable school culture, leaders should align individual efforts toward common goals and offer recognition and support for meaningful accomplishments. To avoid overload and resistance to change, leaders need to cut out nonessential and unproductive activities before introducing innovations. Leaders also should build the capacity to work more effectively and efficiently, and encourage program ownership and leadership among all stakeholders.

Ultimately, the leader is responsible for the quality of the school culture and climate. Is there a clear focus on student achievement? Is the school culture characterized by collaboration or isolation? Do people feel valued? Do the adults want to come to work? Do students feel safe? Do teachers have energy and enthusiasm for school leadership roles or do individual efforts fall by the wayside and go unacknowledged?

District leaders, union representatives, and school board members also must be held accountable for their critical roles within the educational system. Are efforts characterized by a sense of urgency for improving student achievement? Are policies and contracts evaluated for how they support or hinder equitable, high quality instruction for all students? Is everyone monitoring and using data to

inform decisions? Is there an appropriate balance between allowing autonomy and holding people accountable for consistent implementation and producing results? Is there a focus on providing high quality support (e.g., professional development, staffing) for teachers and principals to use data and research? ²³

Evaluation of these and other questions helps leaders identify their own learning needs as they too reach for excellence.

The key steps in developing a system of accountability for effective leadership are:

1. Develop the capacity to implement a local accountability system.
2. Identify measurable goals and indicators.
3. Assess stakeholder perceptions and district and school culture.
4. Analyze multiple sources of data.
5. Make continuous improvement decisions.
6. Report results.

Each of these steps is explained below.

1. Develop the capacity to implement a local accountability system.

California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs)

Just as standards guide student and teacher development, the CPSELs are designed to guide the development of administrators. These standards provide a common language that should be used to inform administrator recruitment, preparation, induction, ongoing support, and finally recognition for accomplished leadership.

The CPSELs identify educational leaders as particularly responsible for developing the skills and resources necessary to implement local accountability systems. For example, the standards say leaders should be able to:

- facilitate the development of a shared vision for the achievement of all students based upon data from multiple measures of student learning and relevant qualitative indicators,

- create an accountability system of teaching and learning based on student learning standards,
- utilize multiple assessment measures to evaluate student learning to drive an ongoing process of inquiry focused on improving the learning of all students and all subgroups of students,
- shape a culture where high expectations for all students and all subgroups of students constitute the core purpose,
- guide and support the long-term professional development of all staff consistent with the ongoing effort to improve the learning of all students relative to the content standards,
- monitor and evaluate the programs and staff at the site,
- incorporate information about family and community expectations into school decision-making and activities,
- communicate information about the school on a regular and predictable basis through a variety of media and modes,
- reflect on personal leadership practices and recognize their impact and influence on the performance of others, and
- engage in professional and personal development.

Educational leaders should have an opportunity to self-assess their progress on meeting these standards. The **California School Leadership Academy** (www.csla.org) has developed a *Descriptions of Practice* document (forthcoming) that can be used to guide administrators' self-assessment of the CPSELs. Future evaluation instruments should be aligned to the developmental levels described within this document, when available.

Feedback from stakeholders, compared to individual self-assessments based on the *Descriptions of Practice*, should be used to help educational leaders identify their own learning goals and professional development needs. Self-assessments based on the CPSELs should remain confidential and be used to guide professional learning and collaboration with more experienced peers.

2. Identify measurable goals and indicators.

Both the district and the school will need challenging student learning goals to invigorate the community and to encourage real change. A goal that is too easy to reach may not inspire people enough. An unrealistic goal may limit buy-in from stakeholders. Challenging, measurable goals can drive the local accountability

system by creating a vision for progress and a common set of high expectations. These goals, while based on data, will also help to drive the local accountability system and future collection of data.

Once the student learning goals are established, the next step is to select measurable indicators of progress. Performance or accountability indicators are associated with student achievement, district and school processes, teacher learning, and the quality and efficacy of leadership. These indicators are concise statements about the type of data to be collected in the decision-making process. Typically, one identifies:

- the target group assessed (e.g., school board members, administrators, teachers, classified staff, students, parents),
- the data collection method (e.g., assessment, self-assessment, questionnaire, interview, observation), and
- the measurement statistic (e.g., number, average, percent).

The data should show progress at intervals throughout the year to provide feedback and to encourage mid-course corrections when needed. Summative data at the end of each year should be used to identify individuals, teams, or schools for rewards or recognition. Progress across more than one year will help to show continuous improvement and also should be recognized.

Districts and schools will want complementary indicators of progress. The district accountability system should focus on test scores and other state-reported indicators such as attendance and dropout rate, but the school will want more site-specific indicators that relate to the instructional practices, programs, staff, and leadership within particular schools. The key is to make sure that school indicators provide support for the districtwide indicators.²⁴

3. Assess stakeholder perceptions and district and school culture.

Perceptions of Stakeholders, Including Students

Surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, and individual interviews should be used to learn more about how people view the school and their attitudes toward being a part of the school community. Staff, parents, students, and community members should be asked what they think and feel. Especially in secondary schools, it is critical to ask students how welcome they feel, how they view teaching and learning at the school, and what level of support they perceive.

Adding student voices to the accountability dialogue encourages student ownership and validates other kinds of data.

School Culture

Assessing school culture also provides critical feedback on the degree to which a school has become an equity-conscious learning organization. The process below represents one viable strategy for assessing school culture:²⁵

1. Ask school staff to rate their school culture using a rubric, choosing the level that best describes the school. A sample school culture rubric may be found in the Focus on Learning school self-study materials (available at www.acswasc.org/tools/index.html).
2. Tabulate the results for all to see. Discuss individuals' rationales and explanations and work to reach agreement on a common rating. Create a chart showing the School Culture rating for this point in time, leaving space for follow-up ratings later in the school year. Repeat this process two or three times in the first year, and just once per year in subsequent years.
3. Identify school strengths based on language in the scoring guide and record consensus agreements.
4. Identify a challenge to reaching the next higher level on the scoring guide. Pick one or a few related descriptors in a higher level (at least level 3) as the improvement target.
5. Draft a mini-action plan briefly stating what the school staff will do to improve school culture. One or a few sentences or bullet points are enough.
6. At each monthly staff meeting, record on Post-It notes any anecdotes of actions that show an improvement.
7. At the end of the year, ask staff to rate the school culture again, tabulate results, and reach agreement on a common rating. This information can be used in the comprehensive school accountability report.

District Culture

Assessing district culture is also vitally important in understanding the effectiveness of district leadership and the organizational support teachers and others perceive. A rubric may be used, for example, with a group of elementary or secondary school principals or with school leadership teams. Use a process similar to the one described above for assessing school culture.

4. Analyze multiple sources of data.

The ability to manage and use data is really at the heart of maintaining a focus on continuous improvement. This skill makes it possible to generate credible results that people can rally behind and use as a galvanizing force. Skillful data managers ensure that results are timely. Assessment results are presented and reported regularly, each month, quarter, or trimester, depending on the local instructional cycle. Data are analyzed and decisions are made quickly to guide teaching while there is time to impact student learning. Evaluation results of district and school processes, teacher learning, and school climate must also be presented periodically, initially more than once a year, to build and sustain momentum.

An educational leader must manage this information, using technology when necessary. He or she must present it in collegial and supportive environments, allowing different viewpoints and perceptions to arise, and use the information to collaboratively solve problems and make effective decisions. This data process is critical to becoming a learning organization, one in which people feel like professionals who can accommodate change and improve results.²⁶

A general strategy should be to gather and use multiple sources of information to make decisions. Balance quantitative student achievement data with data about effective school processes, including anecdotes and narratives about successes and frustrations. Back up data gathered from students about how they perceive teaching and learning with data gathered from teachers. Compare self-assessments to external ratings from stakeholders or supervisors. When data converge and tell a similar story, one can have more confidence that the results are accurate.

5. Make continuous improvement decisions.

An educational leader must evaluate the effectiveness of the accountability system itself. The Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) presents standards for accountability systems. Data should indicate the degree to which the accountability system builds staff capacity, affects resource allocation, supports high quality instruction, promotes student equity, affects teacher quality, and produces unanticipated outcomes, such as higher dropout rates.²⁷

Below are sample strategies for evaluating the success of the local accountability system, once it is established:

- The superintendent and staff review the accountability system annually regarding its usefulness for making decisions about individual students and the instructional programs. Judging the system's efficacy is based on a review of:
 - o feedback from various stakeholders, especially school leadership teams,
 - o process results indicating the degree to which planned activities were implemented, and
 - o whether student achievement data show improvement.
- An online questionnaire allows school site staff to evaluate the district's accountability system and automatically tabulates summary statistics (e.g., percent of positive ratings) and comments (negative, positive, recommendations for improvement). The superintendent and staff review the results and plan improvements for the next year.
- At the end of the year, school leadership teams respond to a district survey about the effectiveness of the accountability process. They answer questions about the quality of the strategic goals, the usefulness and timeliness of data reports, and their capability and freedom to make school program decisions based on the data.
- The superintendent discusses district and school findings at administrator meetings each trimester. Reports are presented to the board. At a year-end meeting, board members evaluate their roles and practices that contributed to or hindered district and school improvements.
- At the end of each year, all staff evaluate the effectiveness of the local accountability system to report results and plan improvements. The local system is evaluated in terms of its ability to:
 - o identify students in need of intervention using up-to-date accurate information,
 - o monitor individual student progress each trimester and adjust strategies as necessary,
 - o recognize effective practices and celebrate successes, and
 - o pinpoint challenges and solutions to refine the program in the first and second trimesters, and revise the school plan at the end of the third trimester.

6. Report results.

Leaders should generate reports at multiple times and for multiple audiences, ranging from parents to teaching staff to school boards and to the local community.

The district should develop a user-friendly database for access by principals and teachers. School staff might access a database residing on a school computer, the district's central computer, or an Internet site such as that provided by some education software companies and county offices of education.

Database software can give administrators and teachers instant access to student data and links data to suggestions for curriculum and instruction. Report cards can be generated from the database. Student records also can be shared with other districts, a benefit especially for mobile students. Another database may provide a framework for entering information into an easily revised and dynamic school plan. Such a database will generate presentations in a variety of formats, depending on the needs of the audience. Software is available that links various databases to generate local accountability reports.

The Comprehensive Local Accountability Report

A comprehensive local accountability report should integrate data from a variety of sources. The most important indicators of educational success are student achievement results.²⁸ However, it is also important to establish causal links between changes in student achievement and changes in teaching and leadership. Accordingly, an accountability report should also include data about district and school characteristics, organization, and instructional programs. In other words, the elements of a comprehensive local accountability report are:

- Student Achievement Data
 - o percent at/above proficient on state assessments
 - o percent at/above proficient on local assessments
 - o for all students and for sub-groups of students
- District and School Characteristics
 - o facilities
 - o resources
 - o staff and student demographics

- o crime statistics
- District and School Organization
 - o management structure
 - o evaluation of school climate, culture, and leadership
 - o evaluation of professional development
- School Instructional Program
 - o priority standards
 - o alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to standards
 - o quality of assessments
 - o core instructional strategies
 - o school interventions
 - o home-school partnerships
 - o special programs
 - o accountability plan

Such a report is comprehensive, but it does not have to be daunting. The purpose of the report is to show changes in student achievement from one year to the next. The rest of the information provides a context and provides details about the factors that had an impact on any changes in student learning.

Indicators of Effective Leadership

SAMPLE INDICATORS

- stability/mobility of effective leadership
- percentage of supervised staff giving satisfactory ratings to leaders, based on six characteristics from the *California Professional Standards for School Leaders*:
 - o Does the leader facilitate a shared vision of learning?
 - o Does the leader nurture a culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth?

- o Does the leader ensure efficient and effective management of the organization and its resources?
- o Does the leader collaborate effectively with families and community members?
- o Does the leader model a code of ethics and develop professional leadership capacity?
- o Does the leader understand, respond to, and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts?
- percentage of students, disaggregated by student group, who rate the school climate as supportive
- percentage of parents, disaggregated by student group, who express satisfactory ratings on home-school communication
- percentage of staff who rate the school as a proficient learning organization
- percentage of staff who rate the district as a having a positive and supportive organizational culture

Endnotes

- 1 *Improving Districts: Systems that Support Learning* (San Francisco: WestEd, 2002), p. 15. This document describes key practices in award-winning districts that continually improve student achievement.
- 2 John Carr, *A Map for Teaching and Assessing California's English Language Development and English Language Arts Standards for English Learners* (San Francisco: Northern California Comprehensive Assistance Center at WestEd, 2001).
- 3 *Aiming High* (Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001).
- 4 "Scoring Rubric for Grade 4 and 7 California Writing Standards Tests" (available from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/star/Rubric4and7.pdf>).
- 5 Douglas B. Reeves, *Accountability in Action: A Blueprint for Learning Organizations*, Chapter 20, (Denver, CO: Center for Performance Assessment, www.testdoctor.com, 2000).
- 6 John Carr and Elaine M. Artman, *The Bottom-Up Simple Approach to School Accountability and Improvement* (Norwood: MA, Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 2002), p. 101. Adapted with permission from the publisher and authors.
- 7 Carr and Artman, p. 71. Adapted with permission from the publisher and authors. Definitions of criteria for a high quality assessment:
 - Validity: The content of the assessment and how it is measured aligns with what and how students were taught.
 - Consistency: A student's score accurately reflects the student's true achievement level.
 - Equity: All student's scores accurately reflect their true achievement level. Each student has an opportunity to both learn (equitable instruction) and show what they have learned. Accommodations in test administration and alternative instruments are used when appropriate.
 - Credibility: Teachers and students believe the test is accurate and everyone is encouraged to give their best effort.
 - Meaningfulness: Administrators, teachers, parents, and students all believe the test is worth the time, cost, and energy it takes to prepare, administer, score, and analyze results of the assessment.
- 8 Carr and Artman, p. 147. Adapted with permission from the publisher and authors.
- 9 Robert Barr and William Parrett, *Hope at Last for At-Risk Youth* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1995); Richard Allington and Patricia Cunningham, *Schools that Work* (New York: Longman, 1996).
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- 11 Douglas Reeves, Appendices C and D in *Accountability in Action* (Denver, CO: Advanced Learning Centers, Center for Performance Assessment, 2000).

- 12 Douglas B. Reeves, "Six Principles of Effective Accountability," *Harvard Education Letter* (March/April 2002): pp. 7-8.
- 13 Kati Haycock, "Good Teaching Matters: How Well-Qualified Teachers Can Close the Gap," *Thinking K-16* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust) 3, no. 2 (1998).
- 14 Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).
- 15 As described in the prepublication edition of the CDE Professional Development Task Force Report, 2001, Linda-Darling Hammond and Lionel Meno, Co-Chairs, p. 31.
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- 17 *Designs for Learning* (Santa Cruz, CA: ToucanEd Publications, 2000). This publication was developed as part of the California Professional Development Reform Initiative sponsored by the California Department of Education with support from the California Professional Development Consortia, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, the California Staff Development Council, and the New Teacher Center at UC-Santa Cruz.
- 18 Adapted from the prepublication edition of the CDE Professional Development Task Force Report, 2001, pp. 35-6.
- 19 See Thomas R. Guskey, *Evaluating Professional Development* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2000). He describes five levels of evaluation, depending on the goals and purposes of the professional development.
- 20 *A Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities* (Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center at the University of California-Santa Cruz, 1998).
- 21 Kati Haycock, *Dispelling the myth: High poverty schools exceeding expectations* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 1999).
- 22 Mike Schmoker, *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement* (Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1996), p. 107.
- 23 *Urgency, Responsibility, Efficacy: Preliminary Findings of High-Performing Texas School Districts* (Austin, TX: Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, 1999).
- 24 Douglas B. Reeves, "Caught in the Middle," *American School Board Journal* (December 2000): p. 27.
- 25 Carr and Artman, pp. 127-33. Adapted with permission from the publisher and authors.
- 26 Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.
- 27 Ann C. Lewis, "A Second Chance for Policy Makers," *Phi Delta Kappan* 83, no. 9 (May 2002): pp. 648-649.
- 28 Carr and Artman, p. 240. Adapted with permission from the publisher and authors.