

## Federal and State Accountability

Taxpayers deserve to know how well public schools are achieving state standards. Parents deserve to know how well their children and the schools they attend are achieving state standards. Public education policies and programs now emphasize all students achieving to high, rigorous standards. The increasing demand for hard evidence that students are learning has led states and the federal government to enact legislation mandating tests and school accountability.

In response to the statewide public demand and federal legislation for greater accountability, California's system of accountability has been changing and will continue to do so. This can be confusing for districts and especially for schools in determining what goals they must meet. Districts and schools would like to know if there is coherence and overlap in federal and state legislation and if new legislation results in more or fewer requirements. By knowing the main points of various education laws, districts can design a local integrated system that addresses various requirements and maintains a unified focus on improving student achievement.

### **Federal Accountability Legislation**

Title I requires accountability that federal funds are helping low-achieving students in high poverty schools to improve their academic performance. Accountability requirements have always included school-level reports of student growth on academic assessments. Districts submit school data to the state, which, in turn, submits data to the federal system. Ultimately, reports are submitted to the U.S. Congress for review.

In 1994, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) and mandated content and performance standards. Current legislation, No Child Left Behind, strengthens language regarding accountability for students reaching high standards.

### **NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

P.L. 107-110, the federal education legislation, was reauthorized in 2001 as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Three principles appear throughout the law:

- accountability for results;
- flexibility; and
- scientifically-based research strategies.

Language about compensatory education was replaced by references to enriched and accelerated instruction. The January 2002 special issue of the Title I Monitor by the Education Funding Research Council compares and summarizes key Title I-related provisions of IASA and NCLB.

NCLB contains themes related to standards, assessment and accountability; teaching and learning; professional development; parent and community involvement/partnerships; and fiscal resources and governances. Key provisions in the theme on standards, assessment, and accountability are as follows.

- **Achievement Levels:** Three achievement levels (advanced, proficient, and basic) are to be reported for assessments in reading and math, and science in 2005-06.
- **State assessments:** Annual valid, reliable, multiple up-to-date assessments aligned to state standards in grades 3-8 by 2005-06; science by 2007-08 (as well as current requirement of at least once in grade spans 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12).
- **Assessment results:** Disaggregated and reported for state, district, and schools by racial ethnic group, gender, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, migrant status, and disability status. Racial ethnic group and socioeconomic status are part of California's Academic Performance Index (API).

The local education agency (LEA; school districts and county offices of education in California) must show how assessments are used to identify children at risk of reading failure (required component of Reading First and Early Reading First).

**Adequate yearly progress (AYP):** States must define AYP for LEAs and include graduation rates for secondary school students and at least one other academic indicator. All students must reach proficiency in 12 years. States must raise achievement targets at least once every three years, and set separate, measurable annual objectives for continuous and substantial improvement for the disaggregated student groups.

**English Language Development (ELD):** States must assess English learners on academic English proficiency in oral language, reading, and writing skills. Beginning in 2002-03, schools and districts must include results in their annual report cards and demonstrate steady gains in achievement of English learners if they are to make adequate yearly progress.

**School and LEA Improvement:** Title I schools failing to make AYP for two consecutive years are identified by the LEA for school improvement and must

develop and implement school plans for improving student achievement in language arts and mathematics. After the first year in this status and failure to improve, the school must offer supplemental services. LEAs that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years are identified by the state as needing improvement and must revise the LEA plan. Achieving AYP for two consecutive years removes the schools and LEAs from improvement status.

**Corrective Action:** Schools failing to make AYP for two additional years are placed in corrective action and additional sanctions apply (e.g., replace relevant staff, restructure the school, decrease management authority, appoint outside expert advisor, extend school year or day, institute new curriculum and professional development). Failure to make AYP for two additional years triggers a new category, restructuring, in which staff are reconstituted or school management is given to another entity. LEAs have the same schedule and similar sanctions.

Schools in California are identified for Title I Program Improvement (called School Improvement in former IASA and current NCLB) if they have not met API growth targets for two consecutive years.

## **California's Accountability Legislation**

A local accountability system should address California legislation; namely, the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) and Pupil Promotion and Retention.

### **STUDENT TESTING AND REPORTING (STAR)**

SB1X was enacted in 1997 and established funding for the Student Testing and Reporting program (STAR). STAR requires that each student in grades two through eight is tested in reading, written expression, spelling, and mathematics. In grades nine through eleven, each student is tested in reading, writing, mathematics, history-social science, and science.

STAR required a single state standardized test starting in spring 1998. The State Board of Education selected the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, Form T (SAT-9), published by Harcourt Brace. The Spanish Assessment of Basic Education, Second Edition (SABE/2), published by CTB McGraw Hill was selected for testing Spanish-speaking English learners who have been enrolled in California public schools fewer than 12 months.

## CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TESTS

SAT-9 includes additional items to expand the measurement of state content standards. The augmented English/language arts test was accomplished in spring 2001; and the augmented mathematics test is planned for completion in spring 2002. In 2001, the augmented SAT-9 was titled the California Standards Test. A writing performance assessment in grades four and seven, rating on a four-point scale, was added in 2001.

In April 1998, the State Board of Education initiated the development of performance standards by adopting the three performance levels and descriptions used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): basic, proficient, and advanced, which correspond to the three levels required by IASA. In 2001, “below basic” and “far below basic” were added for a total of five performance levels. In 2001, performance levels on the California Standards Test for English Language Arts were established, based on the percentage of items answered correctly. Performance levels for Mathematics are planned for 2002.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (PSAA)

The California Department of Education’s Web site ([www.cde.ca.gov/psaa](http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa)) contains a program overview that presents a graphic illustration of the 1999 Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA). PSAA contains three major components:

- Academic Performance Index (API);
- Awards programs; and
- Immediate Intervention and Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP).

**API:** The Academic Performance Index (API) is the state’s accountability measure for schools. It is a composite of results on California’s state tests for reading, writing, and mathematics for elementary and middle schools, and also includes science and social science for high schools.

The API can range from 200 to 1,000. A score of 800 was set as the achievement goal. The API is used to rank schools by 10 levels, or deciles. Schools are assigned two rankings: an absolute rank comparing all public schools, and a relative rank comparing a school to comparable schools (100 schools closest on a Socioeconomic Characteristics Index).

The 2001 Base APIs include results from the California Standards Test in English language arts, first given in spring 2001. Previously, the API relied solely on

results from the national, standardized norm-referenced Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (SAT-9). The 2001 Base API determines the targets for the spring 2002 testing and provides new school rankings.

Results from the California Standards Test in English language arts now constitutes 36% of the API for a typical elementary or middle school (grades 2 through 8), and 24% of the API for a typical high school (grades nine through eleven). The remainder of the API consists of SAT-9 results. Over the next few years, the API will incorporate other California standards tests as well as the California High School Exit Examination. Eventually, the API will include graduation and attendance rates.

For 2001-2002, schools that meet their API growth targets and make at least five points growth (four points for all numerically significant student groups based on racial ethnic and socioeconomic status) will be eligible for consideration for API-based awards programs. Schools that fail to meet their growth targets and receive a 2001 API statewide rank of 1 to 5 will be invited to participate in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP).

The chronology of indicators to be included in the API is as follows:

- SAT-9 in 1999;
- California Standards Test in language arts in 2001;
- California Standards Test in mathematics planned for 2002;
- California High School Exit Exam planned for 2004; and
- certificated staff attendance rates and student graduation rates specified but no date set for inclusion.

Awards Program: The purpose of the PSAA awards program is to recognize schools (and staff at those schools) that meet their API growth targets. Each award program has its own set of eligibility criteria and expenditure guidelines. Awards may go to certificated staff, schoolwide staff, and/or the school itself. The three awards programs are: Certificated Staff Performance Incentive, Governor's Performance Awards, and School Site Employee Performance Bonus.

II/USP: The Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) is a major part of California's Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999. II/USP grant awards provide selected schools an opportunity to participate in planning and implementation activities for improved student achievement. Failure to meet API growth targets for student achievement after one year of implementation triggers local district interventions. Failure after two consecutive years triggers state interventions (still being defined).

For more information about API, contact the California Department of Education's Policy and Evaluation Division at 916.657.2757 or 916.657.2273. Regarding current developments, visit the regularly updated CDE Web sites:

PSAA: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/>

API: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api/>

Awards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/awards/>

Interventions: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/iiusp>

API Reports: <http://api.cde.ca.gov/>

### **PUPIL PROMOTION/RETENTION**

The state's 1998 Pupil Promotion/Retention (PPR) legislation directly applies to individual students. Schools and districts are required to design program services, often using Title I and state funds, to help students at-risk of retention to accelerate their learning.

Measures of reading are the basis of criteria for promotion or retention at the end of grades two and three. At the end of fourth grade, the intermediate grades, and the middle grades, criteria are based on measures of reading, writing and mathematics. Some districts have voluntarily added other grade levels to local PPR policies, such as first and ninth grades.

To respond appropriately to PPR legislation, the local accountability system should monitor valid and reliable assessment data for individual students and evaluate the effectiveness of district and school instructional program strategies to avoid retention and accelerate student learning.

## **Conclusion**

California has been working to align the interventions and sanctions contained in the state legislation (PSAA) with the federal P.L. 107-110 legislation (No Child Left Behind). Coherence between state and federal systems streamlines the external accountability process for schools and districts. State assessment results will eventually trigger the same or aligned awards, interventions, and sanctions in both state and federal legislation.

The district's role is to integrate the state legislation and policies, PSAA and PPR in particular, into a comprehensive accountability system and present the unified

approach to schools for local implementation. While the PPR legislation focuses on individual student decisions, the school and district can use group data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Local assessment results can be compared to state results. When local results indicate a meaningful increase from year to year, and that pattern is supported by a similar pattern for state results, the school and district can be more confident that student achievement is improving.

This conclusion about federal and state accountability legislation leads into the next section about how a district's local accountability system can respond to the external federal and state systems.