

AUGUST 2016

HIGH STAKES FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS: STATE ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE AGE OF ESSA



By Michael J. Petrilli, David Griffith,
Brandon L. Wright, and Audrey Kim

Foreword by
Chester E. Finn, Jr.



The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is the nation's leader in advancing educational excellence for every child through quality research, analysis, and commentary, as well as on-the-ground action and advocacy in Ohio. It is affiliated with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and this publication is a joint project of the Foundation and the Institute. For further information, please visit our website at www.edexcellence.net or write to the Institute at 1016 16th St. NW, 8th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20036. The Institute is neither connected with nor sponsored by Fordham University.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
----------	---

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
-------------------	---

INTRODUCTION	10
--------------	----

METHODS	12
---------	----

RESULTS	14
---------	----

CLOSING THOUGHTS	21
------------------	----

ENDNOTES	22
----------	----

INDEX OF PROFILES	24
-------------------	----

FOREWORD

By Chester E. Finn, Jr.

Accountability has been a central theme of U.S. education reform for almost two decades, driven by the unchallenged central finding of James Coleman's [seminal 1966 study](#): Although some programs are demonstrably more effective than others, there's no direct link between what goes into a school by way of resources and what comes out by way of student learning. Sage policy makers have recognized that instead of trying to micromanage school and district "inputs," they should clearly state the results they want their educational institutions to produce, assess how satisfactorily those results are being achieved, and then hold schools and school systems to account, with rewards of various sorts for success and interventions of various sorts in the event of institutional failure.

This strategy has worked fairly well. In particular, after years of stagnation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, achievement began to rise again in the late 1990s—particularly in the earlier grades and most notably in math—as states set new academic standards, started testing their students regularly, and installed their own versions of "consequential accountability" systems. Once No Child Left Behind (NCLB) made this reform regime inescapable, "late adopter" states—those jurisdictions that hadn't already moved in this direction on their own—also started to see gains. Rigorous studies have shown that accountability deserves at least some of the credit for these improvements, which is not too surprising, considering that just about every person and institution does a little better at any number of undertakings when consequences follow from success and failure.¹

So far so good. Yet we must not gloss over critical details. Early proponents of accountability in public education tended to speak in generalities; it was said, for example, that we needed to hold schools accountable for "raising student achievement." But whose achievement? All students? In which subjects? Measured how?

NCLB provided its own answers to these questions. Schools would be held to account for getting increasing proportions of their students, and increasing proportions of key subgroups, to "proficiency" in reading and math. States would define "proficiency" as they saw fit, but they would eventually need to sanction any school that didn't raise all of its students to that level.

Faced with these requirements, most states did the rational thing and set the proficiency bar low.² And that move, combined with NCLB's mandatory cascade of sanctions, created a powerful incentive for schools to pay close attention to students below the proficiency bar. Conversely, there was absolutely no incentive to worry about the achievement of those who had already reached, or were likely to reach, that bar. To put it bluntly, NCLB did some good for America's struggling pupils, but for high achievers, it mostly just hit the education pause button.

Research has demonstrated that students just below the bar were most likely to make large gains in the NCLB era, while high achievers made lesser gains.³ Those most victimized by this regime were high-achieving poor and minority students—kids who were dependent on the school system to cultivate their potential and accelerate their achievement.⁴ (Equally able youngsters from middle-class circumstances have other people and educational resources to keep them moving forward.)

The good news is that accountability works: Districts, schools, and educators do respond to its incentives and disincentives. The bad news is that kids can get left high and dry when policy makers incent schools to ignore their needs.

WHY FOCUS ON HIGH ACHIEVERS?

Many education reformers look at results for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other macro-measures and see some positive trend lines in recent decades. Gaps are indeed closing, especially between low- and high-achieving students. Isn't that what we want?

Yes, of course—up to a point. Historically our K–12 system has done the greatest harm to our lowest-performing students, who tend to come from poor and minority families. Therefore, using accountability (as well as school choice and other strategies) to improve matters for disadvantaged youngsters has been and should remain a policy focus.

But it should not be the only focus. The policy challenge going forward is to devise accountability systems that deal with the ceiling as well as the floor. This is partly about fairness. It's wrong for any child to miss out on academic challenges at school, and we should do everything we can to develop the full potential of all our students, including high achievers. We must also remember, though, that the country's future economic competitiveness, scientific leadership, and national security depend on how successfully we maximize the learning of our ablest children. If we want tomorrow's scientists, entrepreneurs, and inventors to "look like America," our schools need to take special pains with the education of high-ability kids from disadvantaged circumstances. They too should have the chance to realize the American Dream.

There's a political argument, too: How can we expect parents to support public education when many of their children aren't a priority for the schools they attend?

And there's a powerful case to be made for accelerating social mobility by educating high-ability, low-income children. These are the poor kids, many of them from minority groups, who have the best chance to succeed in selective universities, become leaders in their communities, and climb the ladder to the middle class. Yet they are also the kids most dependent on the education system to recognize and draw out their potential. Research from Fordham, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, and elsewhere shows that these low-income "high flyers" are likeliest to "lose altitude" as they make their way through school.⁵ The result is an "excellence gap" rivaling the "achievement gaps" that have been our policy preoccupation.

NCLB-style accountability is partly to blame for that. After all, low-income high achievers are likely to attend high-poverty schools, which face the greatest pressure to raise the test scores of their lowest-performing students and neglect their top pupils. They're also schools that typically face a host of other challenges.

Going forward, policy makers who care about their low-income high achievers should take full advantage of their newfound authority under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to ensure that their schools have ample incentives to educate those children, and all children, to the max.

Mindful of both the challenges the country faces and the new opportunity state leaders have to set matters right, the analysis that follows does two things. First, it advances specific ideas for how state accountability systems can be designed to demand strong performance and growth from high-achieving students while meeting the requirements set forth in ESSA. Second, it rates current (or proposed) accountability systems in the fifty states and the District of Columbia based

on how well they draw attention to high achievers. The evidence, regrettably, is that few of them are doing it well. Which is to say, the problem is sizable, but the opportunity to solve it is at hand.

In an unusual move for Fordham, our own talented research and policy team completed this analysis in-house. Kudos are owed to co-authors David Griffith, Audrey Kim, Mike Petrilli, and Brandon Wright for rolling up their sleeves and seeing this project through to completion. This quartet was responsible for all phases of the study: developing the metric, collecting and analyzing the data, and summarizing the findings.

More than most Fordham publications, this one is motivated by an explicit desire to influence policy makers in the short term. We're mindful that much of what we unearthed about state accountability systems could be out of date within a year's time. But that same year offers state leaders a rare opportunity to do things differently and better. Many issues will be debated as states design their new accountability systems. Our hope is that the educational needs of high-achieving students get the attention they deserve—and that they didn't get in the NCLB era.

Let us say to educators and policy makers who are already retooling their state accountability systems: Those children are counting on you. Their futures depend in no small part on the decisions you are making.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was made possible through the generous support of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and our sister organization, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. We are grateful to interns Daniel Cohen, Andrew Scanlan, Kate Stringer, and Darien Wynn for their research assistance, to Alyssa Schwenk for her role in disseminating the final product, to Jonathan Lutton for the beautiful layout, and to Kevin Mahnken for copy editing. We also thank the many individuals who helped ensure that the information contained in this report was as timely and accurate as possible, including our local respondents and reviewers. We are particularly appreciative of the officials in state departments of education who took the time to review drafts and verify that we had obtained the most current version of their accountability systems. Any errors are ours alone.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report, we examine the extent to which states' current (or planned) accountability systems for elementary and middle schools attend to the needs of high-achieving students, and how these systems might be redesigned under the Every Student Succeeds Act to better serve all students. (A forthcoming analysis will examine accountability for high schools.)

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA ("academic achievement"), reward schools for getting more students to an "advanced" level.**
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA ("student growth"), rate schools using a "true growth model," i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the "proficient" line.**
3. **Include "gifted students" (or "high-achieving students") as a subgroup, and report their results separately.**
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make "growth for all students" count for at least half of the rating.**

Based on these four design features, we rate states' current (or planned) accountability systems using the rubric below and the most recent publicly available information.

TABLE ES-1: RUBRIC FOR RATING STATE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

INDICATOR	RATING
1. Does the state rate schools' "academic achievement" using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an "advanced" level?	★ / ★
2. Does the state rate schools' growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the "proficient" line?	★ / ★
3. Does the state's accountability system include "gifted students," "high-achieving students," or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?	★ / ★
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does "growth for all students" count for at least half of the rating?	★ / ★ / NA*
Total number of stars possible	A maximum of 3 or 4 stars

* State doesn't calculate summative school ratings

This rubric is the basis for two sets of ratings: one for the thirty-nine states (plus the District of Columbia) that calculate summative school ratings (or intend to) and one for the eleven states that don't take this step (or don't plan to).

TABLE ES-2: RESULTS FOR STATES WITH NO SUMMATIVE SCHOOL RATINGS

★ ★ ★	Ohio
★ ★ ☆	South Carolina
★ ☆ ☆	Illinois, Kansas, New Jersey, Tennessee
☆ ☆ ☆	California, Maryland, Montana, New York, North Dakota

TABLE ES-3: RESULTS FOR STATES WITH SUMMATIVE SCHOOL RATINGS

★ ★ ★ ★	(None)
★ ★ ★ ☆	Arkansas, Oregon
★ ★ ☆ ☆	Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Wyoming
★ ☆ ☆ ☆	Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆	Michigan, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia

As these ratings suggest, the overwhelming majority of current (and planned) state accountability systems provide schools with few incentives to focus on their high-achieving students. In fact, our analysis indicates that just four states—**Arkansas, Ohio, Oregon, and South Carolina**—have truly praiseworthy systems when it comes to focusing attention on these students.

Our results also highlight the specific areas where states need to improve:

- » Only four states (Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, and Oregon) base at least half of a school's rating on "growth for all students," and seven states and the District of Columbia assign no weight to this measure. (Eleven states don't calculate summative school ratings.) Given that student growth is the best way to evaluate schools' impact on student achievement—and the best way to signal that all kids matter—this finding is extremely alarming.
- » Just five states (Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Wyoming) include high-achieving or gifted students as a subgroup and separately report their results.
- » Fourteen states and the District of Columbia rate (or plan to rate) schools' achievement using a model that gives extra credit for students who achieve at an "advanced" level, such as a performance index.

Unfortunately, draft regulations published by the Department of Education appear to disallow such indices, and those fourteen states may be required to resume measuring academic achievement via proficiency rates alone. That's a shame, as research suggests that measuring school quality via proficiency rates is a deeply flawed approach that encourages principals and teachers to narrowly focus attention on students performing just above or below the proficiency line.⁶

For this reason, we have one major recommendation for the Department of Education:

ALLOW STATES TO RATE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT USING A PERFORMANCE INDEX.

Such an allowance is both consistent with ESSA and in the best interests of students. Rather than once again encouraging schools to focus on “bubble kids” as they did under NCLB, the department’s final regulations should allow—or, better yet, encourage—performance metrics that account for the achievement of all students.

INTRODUCTION

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures do a better job of capturing schools’ impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. And just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB’s requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth toward English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether each state’s accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We do not examine the quality of their standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance. (See *Important Issues Beyond the Scope of this Analysis*.)

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems to prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that’s because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it’s also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we’re being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that does right by high achievers—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states’ testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate report will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

IMPORTANT ISSUES BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THIS ANALYSIS

In addition to browsing through this report, we encourage readers to spend time with the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's fifty-state report card on closing the excellence gap, which offers a comprehensive look at the variety of state policies that can support high-achieving students.⁷ After all, the four design features examined here do not encompass everything that states could be doing to encourage schools to serve their high-achieving students well. Nor does our analysis capture all of the critical elements of a state accountability system as they pertain to high-achieving students. Most notably, we do not consider the content standards and tests that states have adopted, both of which are worth some discussion.

The foundation of any well-designed accountability system is a set of clear, demanding academic standards like the Common Core State Standards for English and math, which are still in place in more than forty states (despite the political backlash against them). As readers likely know, the Fordham Institute has been a staunch defender of these standards, which we've found to be stronger—in substance, in rigor, and in clarity—than what three-quarters of the states had in place before their adoption, and on par with the rest. Yet we've also warned that they should not be used as an excuse to eliminate services for the nation's academic superstars. (See our white paper, written by Jonathan Plucker, [Common Core and America's High-Achieving Students](#).) While the Common Core standards aim higher than most of the expectations that came before them, they still don't aim high enough for the country's top students. No standards could. Consequently, we've excluded an evaluation of state content standards from this analysis.

The quality of state assessments matters enormously too. And here we wish we could collect data, especially about the capacity of state tests to accurately measure the performance and growth of students who are well above grade level (i.e., whether they contain enough hard questions to capture growth at the high end). Unfortunately, to our knowledge, such data do not exist. Furthermore, a provision of NCLB requiring that all students take the "same tests" was interpreted by both the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations as requiring "on-grade-level" testing, effectively prohibiting states from building tests that were accurate for students well above (or below) grade level.

Though the intent of that decision was pure—it prevents states from setting lower expectations for, and administering easier tests to, low-performing kids—it has curtailed the use of computer-adaptive testing and other strategies for accurately measuring performance at the top of the achievement distribution. Consequently, even the new Smarter Balanced assessments, which are computer-adaptive, have been unable to precisely measure the achievement of students well above grade level.

Thankfully, ESSA eliminates this federal hurdle by giving explicit congressional approval to truly adaptive testing (both above and below grade level) as long as students are tested on grade-level items as well. We hope that Smarter Balanced states move expeditiously to take advantage of this new flexibility—and that other states also transition to adaptive tests.

METHODS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as Level Four on Smarter Balanced or Level Five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It’s not entirely clear from the Department of Education’s proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don’t see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don’t consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.
3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high-achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

Based on the four design features listed above, we rated the school accountability systems in the fifty states and the District of Columbia using the rubric shown below and the most recent publicly available information. (See *Data Collection*.) In particular, we looked at report cards for middle schools, as well as state documents explaining the nitty-gritty of how school grades are (or will be) calculated.⁸

TABLE 1: RUBRIC FOR RATING STATE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

INDICATOR	RATING
1. Does the state rate schools' "academic achievement" using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an "advanced" level?	★ _{Yes} / ★ _{No}
2. Does the state rate schools' growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the "proficient" line?	★ _{Yes} / ★ _{No}
3. Does the state's accountability system include "gifted students," "high-achieving students," or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?	★ _{Yes} / ★ _{No}
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does "growth for all students" count for at least half of the rating?	★ _{Yes} / ★ _{No} / NA*
Total number of stars possible	A maximum of 3 or 4 stars

* State doesn't calculate summative school ratings

DATA COLLECTION

The data in this report reflect information that was publicly available as of July 22, 2016. To collect this information, we scanned state department of education websites for accountability-related documents (such as guides to school rating systems) and inspected school report cards to see what information states reported. For the sake of transparency, we include screenshots of some these documents in the exhibits of the state profiles. To ensure that the information we collected was as up-to-date as possible, we gave state officials the opportunity to review their state's profile before publication.

The task of evaluating state accountability systems is complicated by the fact that so many of them are in flux. Consequently, throughout this report we take the following approach: When a state has publicly committed to changes that satisfy the requirements of one of our indicators, we acknowledge that fact by giving it credit for those changes. However, when a state's intent is ambiguous or unclear, we do not give credit. (Thus, since the process of revising a state's accountability system is often a lengthy one, our scores sometimes reflect a mix of states' current and intended systems.)

RESULTS

Our analysis suggests that the overwhelming majority of current (or planned) state accountability systems provide schools with few incentives to focus on their high-achieving students. However, there is a great deal of variation between states.

To get a more nuanced view, it is helpful to distinguish between states that produce summative ratings of school quality and those that do not. As mentioned in previous sections, states could earn a maximum of either three or four stars depending on whether they combined the indicators by which schools are judged into single grades or ratings. Thus, the thirty-nine states (plus the District of Columbia) that assign such ratings could earn a maximum of four stars, while the eleven states that don't assign them could earn a maximum of three.

We present the results for both groups of states below, as well as the results for each individual indicator.

STATES WITH NO SUMMATIVE SCHOOL RATINGS (MAXIMUM OF THREE STARS)

As shown in Table 2, the states that lack summative school ratings do little to encourage schools to focus on their high achievers, with two exceptions: Ohio, which is the only state to earn three out of three stars (and the only state in either group that earns the maximum number of stars available to it), and South Carolina, which is the only state to earn two out of three stars.

TABLE 2: RESULTS FOR STATES WITH NO SUMMATIVE SCHOOL RATINGS

☆☆☆	Ohio
☆☆☆	South Carolina
☆☆☆	Illinois, Kansas, New Jersey, Tennessee
☆☆☆	California, Maryland, Montana, New York, North Dakota

We view Ohio's accountability system as the best in the country for high achievers: It gives schools additional credit for students who achieve at an advanced level; it rates schools' growth using a model that looks at the progress of all students, not just those below proficient; and it includes "gifted" students as a subgroup and reports their results separately. South Carolina's system, which shares all the characteristics of Ohio's except the mandate for a high-achiever subgroup, is also quite good.

Less impressive, however, are the four states in this group that earn one of three stars, which do little to incentivize schools to focus on their brightest students. And worse still are the five states that earn zero stars—California, Maryland, Montana, New York, and North Dakota—by doing nothing to encourage schools on this front. Besides failing to reward advanced achievement and separately report growth for high achievers, these states fail to rate school-level growth altogether.

STATES WITH SUMMATIVE SCHOOL RATINGS (MAXIMUM OF FOUR STARS)

As shown in Table 3, of the thirty-nine states (and the District of Columbia) that assign summative school ratings, none earn the maximum of four stars. And only two—Arkansas and Oregon—earn three stars, and might be considered leaders when it comes to encouraging a focus on high achievers.

TABLE 3: RESULTS FOR STATES WITH SUMMATIVE SCHOOL RATINGS

★★★★	(None)
★★★☆☆	Arkansas, Oregon
★★☆☆☆	Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Wyoming
★☆☆☆☆	Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia
☆☆☆☆	Michigan, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia

Both Arkansas and Oregon use growth models that include high achievers and make “growth for all students” count for half of schools’ summative ratings. Still, both states’ accountability systems could be improved. For example, Oregon doesn’t give additional credit for students who achieve at an “advanced” level, and Arkansas doesn’t include “talented and gifted” students as a subgroup or separately report their results.

Similarly, most of the fourteen states that earn two stars out of four include high achievers in their growth models but fall short in other ways. For example, most don’t assign much weight to growth or give schools extra credit for students who achieve at an advanced level.

That observation also applies to the eighteen states (plus the District of Columbia) that earn just one star (usually for including high-achieving students in their growth model). These states do a poor job of encouraging schools to focus on their high achievers, and often discourage such a focus.

Finally, five states earn zero stars out of four, meaning they explicitly or implicitly discourage schools from focusing on their brightest students. For example, many base school achievement ratings entirely on proficiency rates, with no additional credit for advanced achievement.

In short, despite ample opportunity to do so over the past few years, most states have largely failed to move beyond the flawed approach to accountability embodied in No Child Left Behind, which placed undue emphasis on proficiency at the expense of students who had already exceeded that standard.

RESULTS FOR INDIVIDUAL INDICATORS

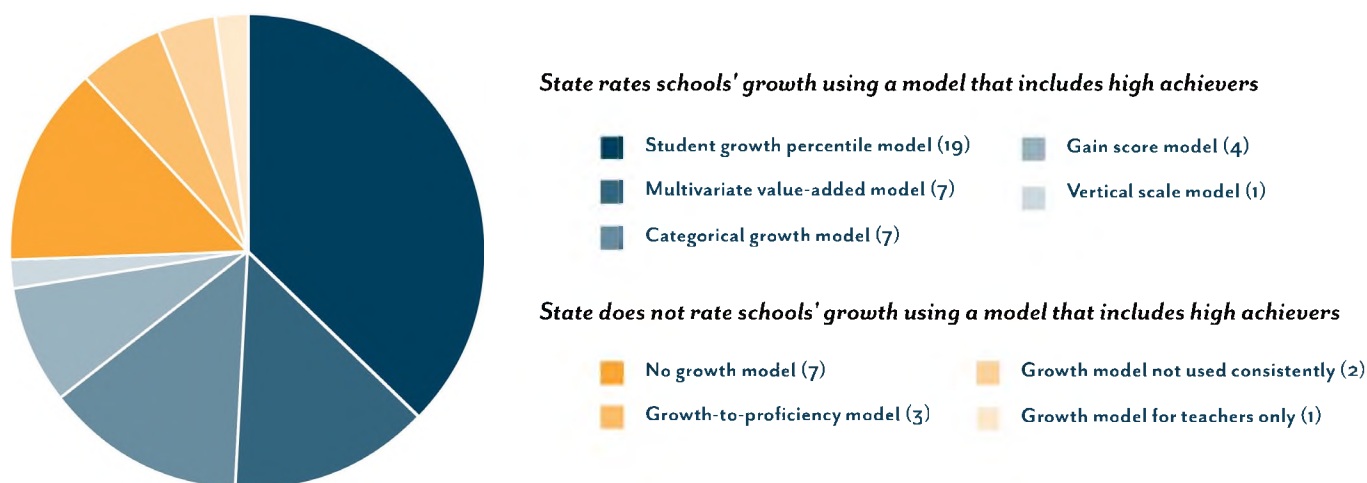
Disaggregating our results by indicator largely confirms our central finding that state accountability systems do little to encourage schools to focus on high achievers. Still, our analysis identifies a few bright spots.

Most states rate schools' growth using a model that includes high-achieving students

Encouragingly, thirty-eight states now rate student growth (at the school level) using a model that includes high achievers, meaning they reward growth beyond proficiency. That number represents real progress from a few years ago, when such an approach was considered unlawful under NCLB. Of those thirty eight states, nineteen use a student growth percentile model, seven use a multivariate value-added model, seven use a categorical growth model, four use a gain score model, and one uses a vertical scale model.⁹ (See Figure 1.)

Of the twelve states that don't rate student growth using a model that includes high achievers, three (Louisiana, Oklahoma, and South Dakota) use some form of growth-to-proficiency model, which does nothing to encourage schools to pay attention to students who are already proficient. And two (New York and Virginia) have developed a growth model, but as far as we can tell, don't use it to rate schools' growth.¹⁰ The other seven states, including Alabama, California, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, North Dakota, and Vermont, have yet to develop a growth model (though Alabama and Michigan appear to be moving toward adopting one).

FIGURE 1: MOST STATES RATE SCHOOLS' GROWTH USING A MODEL THAT INCLUDES HIGH ACHIEVERS



Most states don't give additional credit for students who achieve at an advanced level

Fourteen states and the District of Columbia rate (or plan to rate) schools' achievement using a model that gives additional credit for students who achieve at an "advanced" level (meaning that thirty-six states do not). Most of these states use an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to "basic," full credit for getting students to "proficient," and additional credit for getting students to "advanced" (or something along those lines).¹¹ Unfortunately, it's unclear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether states will be allowed to use such an index as one of their "academic indicators" under ESSA. Obviously we believe that they should be—and that the statute provides plenty of room for such an interpretation.¹² (See *Recommendation for the U.S. Department of Education*.)

Very few states report results for high-achieving students separately

Just five states (Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Wyoming) include high-achieving or gifted students as a subgroup and separately report their results at the school level, meaning that parents and other stakeholders in the other forty-five states and the District of Columbia have little information with which to determine how well these students are being served. In a number of states, school report cards include disaggregated results for almost every subgroup that is of interest to policy makers except high achievers, underscoring the degree to which they are not viewed as a priority.

In general, states that calculate summative school ratings don't assign much weight to "growth for all students"

Of the thirty-nine states (plus D.C.) that calculate summative school ratings, just four (Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, and Oregon) base at least half of a school's rating on "growth for all students." However, a number of other states approach this standard. "Growth for all students" counts for at least 40 percent of summative school ratings in an additional seven

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

As we were repeatedly reminded by state officials while drafting this report, state accountability systems must abide by Uncle Sam's requirements. Thus, the degree to which states can improve these systems in the coming years depends greatly on how the Department of Education views its role under the new law.

In light of these circumstances, we have one major recommendation for the Department of Education:

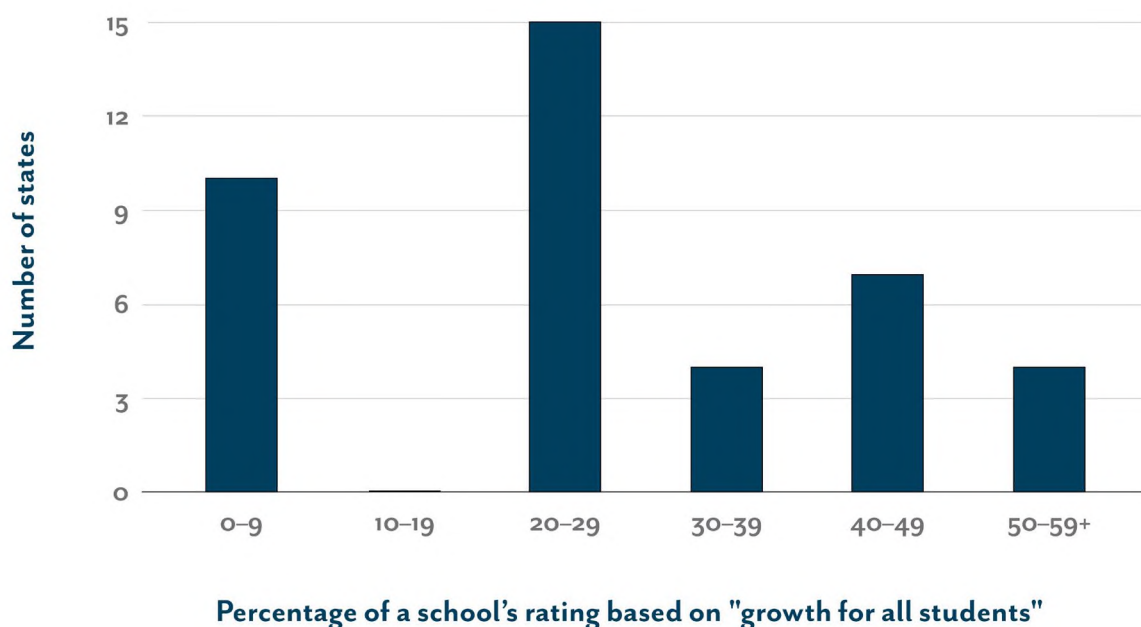
ALLOW STATES TO RATE ACHIEVEMENT USING A PERFORMANCE INDEX.

ESSA requires the use of an academic achievement indicator that "measures proficiency on the statewide assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics." But there are multiple ways to interpret this. Unfortunately, the department's proposed regulations seem to expect states to use proficiency rates to measure school performance. This is a mistake that will encourage schools to focus on "bubble kids"—those just above or below the proficiency cutoff—exactly as they did under NCLB.

Instead, the department's final regulations should allow or even encourage performance metrics that account for the achievement of all students, using practices such as proficiency indices or average scale scores. Such a regulation would be consistent with ESSA and would encourage schools to focus on all kids—as they should.

states, and for between 30 percent and 39 percent in another four.¹³ In fifteen states, it counts for between 20 percent and 29 percent of these ratings.¹⁴ And in Rhode Island, it counts for only 9 percent.¹⁵ Eight states (plus D.C.) still assign no weight whatsoever to "growth for all students," though in some cases, they do weight growth for subgroups or other types of growth (such as growth to proficiency). The fact that so many states are basing most or all of their summative school ratings on proficiency rates, which are poor measures of a school's true quality because they are so strongly correlated with student demographics and prior achievement, is difficult to defend. (See Figure 2.)

FIGURE 2: STATES WITH SUMMATIVE SCHOOL RATINGS ASSIGN LITTLE WEIGHT TO "GROWTH FOR ALL STUDENTS"



Twelve states base at least 50 percent of their summative school ratings on growth but base some or all of their growth ratings on growth for low-performing students or other subgroups, as opposed to "growth for all students." For example, Washington bases 60 percent of schools' grades on growth, but just 30 percent on "growth for all students."

Similarly, some states assign significant weight to other growth measures (such as growth to proficiency) that exclude progress for high achievers and thus do not count as "growth for all students." For example, South Dakota bases 40 percent of schools' grades on growth-to-proficiency measures.

Though no doubt well-intentioned, both of these approaches give schools an incentive to ignore their high-achieving students, especially in high-poverty settings where many kids are below grade level. Why not use a growth model that includes all students instead? And why not weight all students' growth equally, or at least make "growth for all students" count for more of a school's summative rating?

TABLE 4: SUMMATIVE RATINGS FOR EACH STATE BY INDICATOR

STATE	GIVE EXTRA CREDIT FOR ADVANCED ACHIEVEMENT	INCLUDE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN GROWTH MODEL	SEPARATELY REPORT GROWTH FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS	MAKE "GROWTH FOR ALL STUDENTS" COUNT FOR AT LEAST HALF OF A SCHOOL'S RATING	RATING
Alabama	★	☆	☆	☆	★★★★
Alaska	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Arizona	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Arkansas	★	★	☆	★	★★★★
California	☆	☆	☆	NA	☆☆☆
Colorado	☆	★	☆	★	★★★★
Connecticut	★	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Delaware	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
District of Columbia	★	☆	☆	☆	★★★★
Florida	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Georgia	★	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Hawaii	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Idaho	☆	★	☆	★	★★★★
Illinois	☆	★	☆	NA	★★★
Indiana	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Iowa	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Kansas	☆	★	☆	NA	★★★
Kentucky	★	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Louisiana	★	☆	☆	☆	★★★★
Maine	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Maryland	☆	☆	☆	NA	☆☆☆
Massachusetts	★	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Michigan	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆☆☆☆
Minnesota	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Mississippi	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Missouri	★	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Montana	☆	☆	☆	NA	☆☆☆
Nebraska	★	★	☆	☆	★★★★
Nevada	☆	★	★	☆	★★★★
New Hampshire	☆	★	☆	☆	★★★★
New Jersey	☆	★	☆	NA	★★★

STATE	GIVE EXTRA CREDIT FOR ADVANCED ACHIEVEMENT	INCLUDE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN GROWTH MODEL	SEPARATELY REPORT GROWTH FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS	MAKE "GROWTH FOR ALL STUDENTS" COUNT FOR AT LEAST HALF OF A SCHOOL'S RATING	RATING
New Mexico	☆	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
New York	☆	☆	☆	NA	☆☆☆☆
North Carolina	☆	★	★	☆	★☆☆☆☆
North Dakota	☆	☆	☆	NA	☆☆☆☆
Ohio	★	★	★	NA	★★★☆☆
Oklahoma	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Oregon	☆	★	★	★	★☆☆☆☆
Pennsylvania	★	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
Rhode Island	★	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
South Carolina	★	★	☆	NA	★★☆☆
South Dakota	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Tennessee	☆	★	☆	NA	★☆☆☆☆
Texas	☆	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
Utah	☆	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
Vermont	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Virginia	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Washington	☆	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
West Virginia	☆	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
Wisconsin	★	★	☆	☆	★☆☆☆☆
Wyoming	☆	★	★	☆	★☆☆☆☆

CLOSING THOUGHTS

As Uncle Ben famously told Spider-Man, “With great power comes great responsibility.” Since the advent of ESEA waivers, and certainly now under ESSA, states have had greater power to fix the flaws inherent in No Child Left Behind and signal to schools that all students—including high achievers—matter.

Admirably, most states have taken advantage of their additional flexibility to adopt robust growth models. But inexplicably, most have failed to put these growth models at the center of their school accountability systems. As a result, they have maintained one of NCLB’s biggest problems—a focus on getting kids to “proficient.”

States now have a chance to do better. While there may be a temptation for officials to simply tweak the systems that were developed under federal waivers, that would be an enormous mistake and a lost opportunity. Instead, almost every state in the land could dramatically upgrade its system by putting more emphasis on student growth, giving schools credit for getting kids to advanced levels of achievement, and calling attention to the performance of high achievers by treating them as their own subgroup.

High-achieving students—especially those growing up in poverty—need all of the attention they can get. They were an afterthought when No Child Left Behind was crafted fifteen years ago. Let’s not make the same mistake again.

ENDNOTES

1. Eric A. Hanushek and Margaret E. Raymond, *Does School Accountability Lead to Improved Student Performance?* (Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2004), <http://hanushek.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/hanushek+raymond.2005.jpam.24-2.pdf>; and Martin Carnoy and Susanna Loeb, “Does External Accountability Affect Student Outcomes? A Cross-State Analysis,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 24, no. 4 (2002), <https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/EEPAaccountability.pdf>.
2. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Mapping State Proficiency Standards Onto NAEP Scales: Results from the 2013 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Assessments*, NCES 2015-046 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2013), <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/studies/pdf/2015046.pdf>.
3. Jennifer Booher-Jennings, *Below the Bubble: “Educational Triage” and the Texas Accountability System* (New York, NY: Columbia University, 2005), <http://aer.sagepub.com/content/42/2/231.short>; and Dale Ballou and Matthew G. Springer, *Achievement Trade-Offs and No Child Left Behind* (Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, 2008), http://www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/documents/achievement_tradeoffs.pdf.
4. Jonathan Plucker, Jacob Hardesty, and Nathan Burroughs, *Talent on the sidelines: Excellence gaps and America’s persistent talent underclass* (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, Center for Education Policy Analysis, 2013), <http://cepa.uconn.edu/mindthegap>.
5. Joshua S. Wyner, John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio, Jr., *Achievement Trap: How America Is Failing Millions of High-Achieving Students from Lower-Income Families* (Washington, D.C.: Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, 2006), http://www.issuelab.org/resource/achievement_trap_how_america_is_failing_millions_of_highachieving_students_from_lowerincome_families; and Robert Theaker, Yun Xiang, Michael Dahlin, John Cronin, Sarah Durant, *Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude? Performance Trends of Top Students* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2011), <http://edexcellence.net/publications/high-flyers.html>.
6. For better ways the Department of Education could address this issue, see Morgan Polikoff et al., “A letter to the U.S. Department of Education (updated July 14),” *MorganPolikoff.com* (July 12, 2016), <https://morganpolikoff.com/2016/07/12/a-letter-to-the-u-s-department-of-education/>.
7. See Jonathan Plucker, Jennifer Giancola, Grace Healey, Daniel Arndt, and Chen Wang, *Equal talents, unequal opportunities: A report card on state support for academically talented low-income students* (Lansdowne, VA: Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, 2015), <http://www.excellencegap.org/state-report>.

8. In most states, the differences between elementary and middle school accountability systems are subtle. Consequently, in order to simplify our analysis, we decided to use middle school systems as a proxy for K–8 accountability in general. High school accountability, of course, involves a number of additional variables (such as graduation rates and college-level coursework). We will tackle that subject in a separate report.
9. Our definitions are taken from “A Practitioner’s Guide to Growth Models,” Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013, <http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2013GrowthModels.pdf>.
10. Virginia calculates value-added for teachers but not schools, while New York uses a mean growth percentile model to identify low-performing schools but doesn’t rate (or report) growth for the rest. The District of Columbia also fails to rate schools’ growth, even though its primary charter school authorizer (the District of Columbia Public School Charter Board, which oversee 45 percent of the city’s schools) does so as part of its accountability system.
11. One exception is Nebraska, which takes an average of students’ raw test scores (thus rewarding improvement across the achievement distribution).
12. See, e.g., Morgan Polikoff et al., “A letter to the U.S. Department of Education (updated July 14).”
13. At the middle school level. At the elementary school level, Hawaii and Kentucky also meet this standard.
14. Although technically neither state assigns any weight to “growth for all students,” we include Indiana in this group based on the weight it assigns to growth for the highest achieving 75 percent of students. (And we include New Mexico in the previous group based on similar logic.) We also include New Hampshire, where “growth for all students” and “growth for all others” each count for 12 percent of a school’s summative rating.
15. In Rhode Island, as well as several other states, the actual percentage depends on the number of subgroups that exist at a given school. In these cases, we went with the lowest possible weight for “growth for all students.”

INDEX OF PROFILES

ALABAMA	25	KENTUCKY	116	NORTH DAKOTA	209
ALASKA	31	LOUISIANA	122	OHIO	214
ARIZONA	36	MAINE	128	OKLAHOMA	220
ARKANSAS	41	MARYLAND	134	OREGON	225
CALIFORNIA	46	MASSACHUSETTS	139	PENNSYLVANIA	230
COLORADO	51	MICHIGAN	145	RHODE ISLAND	235
CONNECTICUT	56	MINNESOTA	150	SOUTH CAROLINA	241
DELAWARE	61	MISSISSIPPI	155	SOUTH DAKOTA	247
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	67	MISSOURI	161	TENNESSEE	252
FLORIDA	72	MONTANA	166	TEXAS	257
GEORGIA	77	NEBRASKA	171	UTAH	264
HAWAII	82	NEVADA	177	VERMONT	270
IDAHO	88	NEW HAMPSHIRE	183	VIRGINIA	275
ILLINOIS	93	NEW JERSEY	188	WASHINGTON	280
INDIANA	98	NEW MEXICO	193	WEST VIRGINIA	285
IOWA	104	NEW YORK	199	WISCONSIN	291
KANSAS	110	NORTH CAROLINA	204	WYOMING	298

ALABAMA



Alabama's proposed accountability system rewards advanced achievement but would benefit from a stronger emphasis on growth.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Alabama's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's plan for rating school performance during the 2016-17 school year. We do not examine the quality of Alabama's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES ALABAMA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Alabama will give additional credit for students achieving at advanced levels. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Alabama is still developing its growth model. (See Exhibit B.)
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Alabama does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately.
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” will count for 40 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit C.)

EXHIBIT A¹

Indicator Descriptors

Student Achievement

- Determined based on the percentage of proficient students in the areas of reading and math utilizing assessments in tested grades
- 50% of points will be calculated from Reading
- 50% of points will be calculated from Math
- The chart below shows the weights that will be applied to calculate the indicator points earned.

Achievement Level	Weight
Level I	0 points
Level II	0.5 points
Level III	1.0 point
Level IV	1.25 points

Accountability Information Subject to Change

EXHIBIT B²

Indicator Descriptors

Learning Gains

- Determined based on individual students who demonstrate improvement in reading and math from one year to the next using multiple years of data.
- Growth Categories for Learning Gains: Low, Average, and High
- 50% of points will be calculated from Reading
- 50% of points will be calculated from Math
- The chart below shows the weights that will be applied to calculate the indicator points earned.

Growth Category	Weight
Low	0 points
Average	1.0 point
High	1.5 points

Accountability Information Subject to Change

EXHIBIT C³

Draft



Alabama State Department of Education Report Card 2015-2016

ABC Elementary School
District: ABC
Grade(s): K-8

State ■
District ■
School ■

Draft

Final Grade

December 2017

INDICATORS		Indicator Description		Grade	Points	Possible Points
Achievement						
Learning Gains	Reading - Determined based on individual students who demonstrate improvement in reading from one year to the next using multiple years of data.		December 2016	80		
	Math - Determined based on individual students who demonstrate improvement in mathematics from one year to the next using multiple years of data.					
Student Achievement	Reading - Determined based on the percentage of proficient students in the area of reading utilizing assessments in tested grades.		December 2016	60		
	Math - Determined based on the percentage of proficient students in the area of mathematics utilizing assessments in tested grades.					
Achievement Gap	Reading - Determined based on the progress made using the bottom 25% of student data in reading.		December 2017	20		
	Math - Determined based on the progress made using the bottom 25% of student data in mathematics.					
Other Indicators						
Alabama PLAN 2020 Program Reviews	Determined based on a review of programs not measured by standardized tests.		December 2017	20		
Local Indicators	Determined based on one indicator tied to student outcomes.		December 2016	20		
Previous Year Score				Current Year Score		Total Points
200				200		
Grade Scale				To Be Determined		200

ENDNOTES

1. “Alabama’s A–F Report Cards: Update on ESSA Accountability,” Alabama State Department of Education, page 13, accessed July 19, 2016, <http://www.alsde.edu/sec/acct/Resources%20Tabbed/AASB%202016%20-%20%20A-F%20Report%20Card.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 14.
3. Ibid, 10.

ALASKA



Alaska includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Alaska's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-14 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Alaska's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES ALASKA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Alaska does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Alaska uses a categorical model. ² A categorical model compares the performance categories that students fall into from one year to the next.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Alaska does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Alaska comes close. “Growth for all students” counts for 24–40 percent of a school’s summative rating. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

ASPI Rating: ***

ALASKA SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDEX (ASPI): 2013-2014

Printed 9/3/2014

School Grade Span

School District Anchorage School District

School Clark Middle School

6 - 8

Participation Rate Grades 3-10	Number Tested	Number Enrolled	Participation Rate	Met Participation Rate	Points
	1092	1097	99.54%	Yes	None, acts as a trigger to achievement denominator.

K-8 Performance

Academic Achievement	Reading			Writing			Math			Points	Weighting	ASPI Points
	On Proficient	On Tested	Pd Proficient	On Proficient	On Tested	Pd Proficient	On Proficient	On Tested	Pd Proficient			
	736	1084	67.90%	670	1070	62.61%	550	1091	50.41%			
School Progress (Subgroup must have >5 students to be considered)	Growth All		Growth-AK Nat	Growth-Econ Dis		Growth-w/Disab	Growth-LEP					
	93.20		86.22	93.20		75.94	88.42			90.30	0.4	36.12
Attendance Rate	92.16%									80.00	0.25	20.00
									Total K-8 Points	1.00		77.22

9-12 Performance

Academic Achievement	Reading			Writing			Math			Points	Weighting	ASPI Points	
	On Proficient	On Tested	Pd Proficient	On Proficient	On Tested	Pd Proficient	On Proficient	On Tested	Pd Proficient				
	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	0	N/A				
School Progress	Growth All		Growth -AK Nat		Growth-Econ Dis		Growth-w/Disab		Growth-LEP				
(Subgroup must have >5 students to be considered)	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A	0	0.00
Attendance Rate	N/A										N/A	0	0.00
Graduation Rate	4 Year		Cohorts - 4 Yr		5 Year		Cohorts - 5 Yr						
	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A				N/A	0	0.00
College Career Readiness	N/A										N/A	0	0.00
WorkKeys Participation	N/A										N/A	0	0.00
^ - Results are suppressed to protect individual confidentiality.										Total 9-12 Points	0.00	0.00	

^ - Results are suppressed to protect individual confidentiality.

* - All eligible students are counted when Participation Rate is not met.

N/A - Results do not meet minimum reporting thresholds or no students of the reported grade level were served.

Per 4 AAC 06.835(b), this designation becomes final unless a review is requested within 30 days from receipt.

K-8 Enrollment Count:	1,099	K-8 Enrollment Ratio:	1.00
9-12 Enrollment Count:	0	9-12 Enrollment Ratio:	0.00

ASPI Score 77.22

ENDNOTES

1. “Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI) Alaska Department of Education & Early Development Worksheet Explanation,” Alaska Department of Education, page 5, accessed July 14, 2016, https://eed.alaska.gov/akaccountability/aspi/ASPI_Worksheet_CompleteExplanation.pdf.
2. Ibid, 6-7.
3. Ibid, 2-3.
4. “Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI): 2013-14,” Alaska Department of Education, page 23, accessed May 12, 2016, https://education.alaska.gov/aspi/2014/districts/Anchorage_Schools.pdf.

ARIZONA



Arizona's accountability system prioritizes the progress of low performers while giving schools little reason to focus on high achievers.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Arizona's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-14 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Arizona's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES ARIZONA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





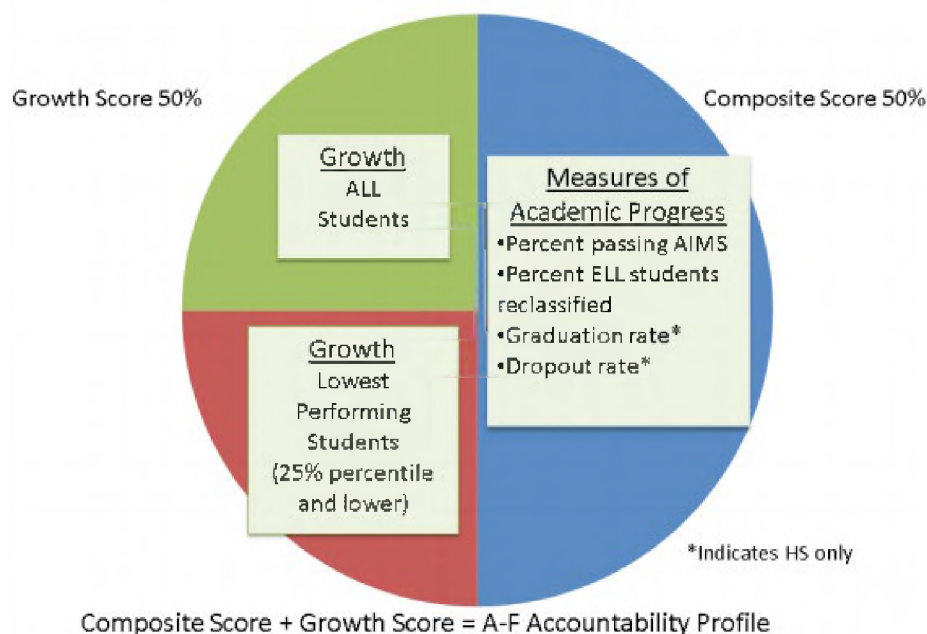
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Arizona does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Arizona uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Arizona does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately.
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 25 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibits A and B.)

EXHIBIT A³

Components of the New Profile



(Growth Score + Composite Score = Total Points)

(100 points possible + 100 points possible + 3 + 3 + 3 = 200+ points possible)

All Students Growth Score = (Median growth in Reading)(.50) + (Median growth in Mathematics)(.50)

Bottom 25% Growth Score = (BQ students Median SGP Reading)(.50) + (BQ students median SGP Mathematics)(.50)

Total Growth Points = 1 + (All Students Growth Score)(.50) + (Bottom 25% Growth Score)(.50)

EXHIBIT B⁴

Table 6. Components of the composite score

Component	Points Possible	Applicable Grades	Description
AIMS & AIMS A proficiency	0 – 100	3-8, 10-12	Percentage of students who Meet or Exceed standards
ELL Additional Points	0 or 3	K-12	23% of FAY ELL students reclassified proficient
FFB Rate Reduction Additional Points	0 or 3	Grade 3 Reading, Grade 8 Math	Reduction of annual fails far below rate
Dropout Rate Reduction Additional Points	0 or 3	9-12	Average annual reduction of dropout rate
Graduation Rate Additional Points	0 or 3	12	Average annual increase of 5-year graduation rate

ENDNOTES

1. “2013 A–F Letter Grade Accountability System Technical Manual,” Arizona Department of Education, accessed May 12, 2016, <http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/files/2013/11/2013-a-f-technical-manual.pdf>.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

ARKANSAS



THREE STARS OUT OF FOUR

Arkansas's new accountability system is one of the best in the country for high achievers thanks to its strong emphasis on growth and its new performance index, which rewards schools that help students achieve at an advanced level. More detailed reporting would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Arkansas' accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-15 school year. We do not examine the quality of Arkansas' standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES ARKANSAS’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





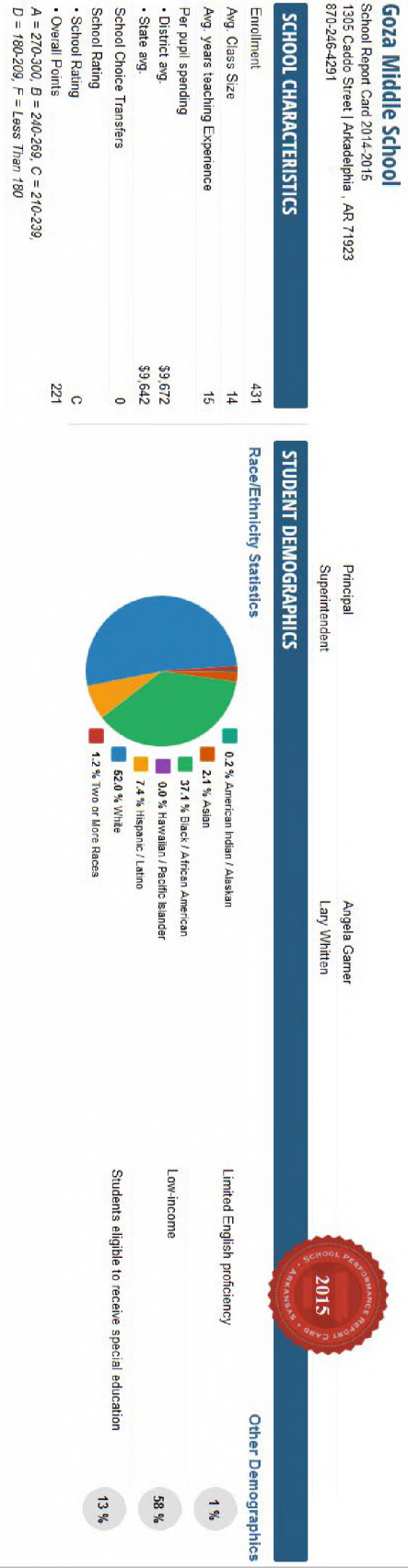
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Arkansas gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Arkansas uses a multivariate value-added model. ² A multivariate value-added model estimates a school’s contribution to students’ academic growth by comparing their actual growth to their expected growth based on prior achievement and other factors.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Arkansas does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for 50 percent of summative school ratings. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴



ENDNOTES

1. “Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing the Public School Rating System on Annual Report Cards (Emergency Rule),” page 2, accessed June 24, 2016, http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/rules/Current/2016/A-F_Emergency_020916_with_Effective_Date.pdf.
2. Ibid, 3-4.
3. Ibid, 6-7.
4. “Goza Middle School Report Card,” Arkansas Department of Education, accessed May 12, 2016, <https://adesrc.arkansas.gov/ReportCard/View?lea=1002009&schoolYear=2015>.

CALIFORNIA



Because California's new accountability system does not reward advanced achievement, its schools will have an incentive to ignore their high achievers until it develops some sort of growth model.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether California's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's plan for rating school performance during the 2016-17 school year. We do not examine the quality of California's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES CALIFORNIA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		California’s new school report cards will not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹ (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		California has yet to develop a growth model, although it is exploring the possibility of using a or multivariate value-added model. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		California does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately.
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	California will not calculate summative school ratings under its new accountability system. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

Indicators	All Student Performance			Equity Report ¹	
	Status	Change		Red~	Orange^
ELA Assessment (K-8)	High	Improved Significantly	#	1, 5~	2^
Math Assessment (K-8)	High	Improved	+	2, 3~	6^
English Learner Proficiency	Intermediate	Maintained	-	N/A (indicator applies only to English Learners)	
Graduation Rate (9-12)	Low	Improved	-	1~	None
Chronic Absenteeism (K-8)	Very Low	Maintained	~	1, 4, 8, 9~	7, 10, 12^
Suspension Rate & Local Climate Survey	Low	Maintained	^	6, 9~	10^
College & Career Readiness (9-12)	High	Improved Significantly	#	None	1^
Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)	Met		+	N/A	
Implementation of Academic Standards	Not Met for One Year		^	N/A	
Parent Engagement	Met		+	N/A	

ENDNOTES

1. “The Academic Indicator,” California Department of Education, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/cc/cp/documents/cpagjun16item02slides3.pdf>.
2. “Developing a New State Accountability System: Update of Possible Student-Growth Models to Communicate Smarter Balanced Results,” California Department of Education, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/memo-dsib-amard-jun16item01.doc>.
3. “How to decipher the states proposed school and district report cards,” Ed Source, accessed July 26, 2016, <https://edsourse.org/2016/how-to-decipher-the-states-proposed-school-and-district-report-cards/566786>.
4. Ibid.

COLORADO



Colorado's accountability system puts a strong emphasis on growth, which gives schools an incentive to focus on all of their students. Rewarding schools that help more students achieve at an "advanced" level would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest "proficiency" bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry "substantial" weight and, in the aggregate, must count "much more" than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Colorado's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Colorado's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES COLORADO’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?



INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Colorado does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Colorado uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Colorado does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. ³ (See Exhibits A and B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for 50 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibits A and B)

EXHIBIT A⁴

School Performance Framework 2014				Level: M										
School: CHALLENGER MIDDLE SCHOOL - 0074		District: ACADEMY 20 - 1040 (1 Year) ²												
Performance		Performance Indicators	Rating	% of Points Earned out of Points Eligible ²										
<p>This is the plan type the school is required to adopt and implement, based on the 1 Year School Performance Framework. Schools are assigned a plan type based on the overall percent of points earned for the official year. The official percent of points earned is matched to the scoring guide below to determine the plan type. Additionally, failing to meet test administration and/or test participation assurances will result in a lower plan type category.</p> <table><tr><th>Plan Assignment</th><th>Framework Points Earned</th></tr><tr><td>Performance</td><td>at or above 59%</td></tr><tr><td>Improvement</td><td>at or above 47% - below 59%</td></tr><tr><td>Priority Improvement</td><td>at or above 37% - below 47%</td></tr><tr><td>Turnaround</td><td>below 37%</td></tr></table> <p>Framework points are calculated using the percentage of points earned out of points eligible. For schools with data on all indicators, the total points possible are: 25 points for Academic Achievement, 50 for Academic Growth, and 25 for Academic Growth Gaps.</p>		Plan Assignment	Framework Points Earned	Performance	at or above 59%	Improvement	at or above 47% - below 59%	Priority Improvement	at or above 37% - below 47%	Turnaround	below 37%	Academic Achievement	Exceeds	100.0% (25.0 out of 25 points)
		Plan Assignment	Framework Points Earned											
		Performance	at or above 59%											
		Improvement	at or above 47% - below 59%											
		Priority Improvement	at or above 37% - below 47%											
Turnaround	below 37%													
Academic Growth	Meets	75.0% (37.5 out of 50 points)												
Academic Growth Gaps	Meets	70.8% (17.7 out of 25 points)												
Test Participation ³	Meets 95% Participation Rate													
TOTAL		80.2%	{ 80.2 out of 100 points }											

²Schools may not be eligible for all possible points on an indicator due to insufficient numbers of students. In these cases, the points are removed from the points eligible, so scores are not negatively impacted.

³Schools do not receive points for test participation. However, schools are assigned one plan type category lower than their points indicate if they do not (1) meet at least a 95% participation rate in all or all but one content area (reading, writing, math, science, social studies and COACT), or (2) for schools serving multiple levels (elementary, middle and high school grades, e.g., a 6-12 school), meet at least a 95% participation rate in all or all but one content area when individual content area rates are rolled up across school levels (elementary, middle and high school grades).

EXHIBIT B⁵

Scoring Guide

Level: M

Scoring Guide for Performance Indicators on the School Performance Framework Report

Performance Indicator	Scoring Guide	Rating	Point Value	Total Possible Points per B&H Level	Framework Points
Academic Achievement	The school's percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced was:		TCAP		
	• at or above the 90th percentile of all schools (using 2009-10 baseline).	Exceeds	4		
	• below the 90th percentile but at or above the 50th percentile of all schools (using 2009-10 baseline).	Meets	3		
	• below the 50th percentile but at or above the 15th percentile of all schools (using 2009-10 baseline).	Approaching	2		
	• below the 15th percentile of all schools (using 2009-10 baseline).	Does Not Meet	1		
Academic Growth	Made AGP	Did Not Make AGP	TCAP	ACCESS	
	• at or above 60.	• at or above 70.	Exceeds	4	2
	• below 60 but at or above 45.	• below 70 but at or above 55.	Meets	3	1.5
	• below 45 but at or above 30.	• below 55 but at or above 40.	Approaching	2	1
	• below 30.	• below 40.	Does Not Meet	1	0.5
Academic Growth Gaps	Made AGP	Did Not Make AGP	TCAP		
	• at or above 60.	• at or above 70.	Exceeds	4	
	• below 60 but at or above 45.	• below 70 but at or above 55.	Meets	3	
	• below 45 but at or above 30.	• below 55 but at or above 40.	Approaching	2	
	• below 30.	• below 40.	Does Not Meet	1	

Cut-Points for Each Performance Indicator

Cut-Points for Plan Type Assignment

Achievement; Growth; Growth Gaps	Cut Point: The school earned ... of the points eligible on this indicator.		Total Framework Points	Cut Point: The school earned ... of the total framework points eligible.	
	• at or above 87.5%	Exceeds		• at or above 59%	Performance
	• at or above 62.5% - below 87.5%	Meets		• at or above 47% - below 59%	Improvement
	• at or above 37.5% - below 62.5%	Approaching		• at or above 37% - below 47%	Priority Improvement
	• below 37.5%	Does Not Meet		• below 37%	Turnaround

School Plan Type Assignments

Performance Plan	Plan description	
Performance Plan	The school is required to adopt and implement a Performance Plan.	A school may not implement a Priority Improvement and/or Turnaround Plan for longer than a combined total of five consecutive years before the State Board of Education must direct the authorizing district's local school board or the Institute to restructure or close the school. The five consecutive school years commence on July 1 of the summer immediately following the fall in which the school is notified that it is required to implement a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan.
Improvement Plan	The school is required to adopt and implement an Improvement Plan.	
Priority Improvement Plan	The school is required to adopt and implement a Priority Improvement Plan.	
Turnaround Plan	The school is required to adopt and implement a Turnaround Plan.	

ENDNOTES

1. “School and District Performance Framework Overview,” Colorado Department of Education, page 13, accessed May 3, 2016, https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/spfdpf_technicalwriteup_072814.
2. Ibid, 19.
3. Ibid, 7-8.
4. “2014 School Performance Framework Challenger Middle School,” Colorado Department of Education, page 1, accessed May 3, 2016, <https://cedar2.cde.state.co.us/documents/SPF2014/1040%20-%200074%20-%201%20Year.pdf>.
5. Ibid, 3.

CONNECTICUT



TWO STARS OUT OF FOUR

Connecticut's new accountability system is better for high achievers than the one it replaced. An even greater emphasis on growth would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Connecticut's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance that will be implemented during the 2016-2017 school year. We do not examine the quality of Connecticut's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES CONNECTICUT’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Connecticut gives additional credit for students achieving at the highest level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Connecticut uses a vertical scale growth model. ² A vertical scale model tracks student growth within the same subject across grades, despite differences in test content and difficulty.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Connecticut does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. ³
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Connecticut comes very close. “Growth for all students” counts for 47 percent of elementary school ratings and 44 percent of middle school ratings. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A⁴

Schools to Earn Points on New Indicators

Points listed below available in years 2 and 3

	Elementary	Middle	High	Middle/ High
Indicator 1: Academic Achievement – ELA, Math and Science (All Students, High Needs Subgroup)	300	300	600	300
Indicator 2: Academic Growth – ELA and Math (All Students, High Needs Subgroup)	400	400	<i>n/a</i>	400
Indicator 4: Attendance / Chronic Absence (All Students, High Needs Subgroup)	100	100	100	100
Indicators 5 and 6: Preparation for College and Career Readiness (Courses/Exams)	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	100	100
Indicator 7: Graduation - On Track in 9 th Grade	<i>n/a</i>	50	50	50
Indicators 8 and 9: Graduation: (4-year All Students, 6-year High Needs Subgroup)	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	200	200
Indicator 10: Postsecondary Entrance	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	100	100
Indicator 11: Physical Fitness	50	50	50	50
Indicator 12: Arts Access	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	50	50
Total Possible Points	850	900	1250	1350



Note: Indicator 3 is the participation rate.

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ENDNOTES

1. “ESEA Flexibility Renewal Connecticut’s ‘Next Generation’ Accountability System March 2016,” Connecticut State Department of Education, pages 9–10, accessed May 4, 2016, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/evalresearch/next_generation_accountability_system_march_2016.pdf.
2. “Connecticut’s Approach to Developing a Student Growth Model using the Smarter Balanced Assessment,” Connecticut State Department of Education, page 1, accessed May 4, 2016, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/evalresearch/growth_model_and_timeline_from_esea_flex_august_2015.pdf.
3. “Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement March 2016,” Connecticut State Department of Education, page 5, accessed May 4, 2016, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/evalresearch/using_accountability_results_to_guide_improvement_20160228.pdf.
4. “ESEA Flexibility Renewal Connecticut’s ‘Next Generation’ Accountability System March 2016,” 5.

DELAWARE



Delaware includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Delaware's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Delaware's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES DELAWARE’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?



INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Delaware does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Delaware uses a gain score model. ² A gain score model measures the absolute improvement in students’ achievement (in points) using a common scale.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Delaware does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Delaware comes close. “Growth for all students” counts for 40 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

Delaware School Success Framework

Seaford Middle School

Address

500 East Stein Highway, Seaford, DE 19973

Phone

(302) 629-4587

Website

www.seafordbluejays.org

District

Seaford School District

Principal

Kim Simmons

Grades Served

5-8

Demographics

Total Enrollment	860
------------------	-----

American Indian/ Native American	0.6%
----------------------------------	------

African American	37.9%
------------------	-------

Asian	1.3%
-------	------

Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.2%
----------------------------	------

Hispanic	17.4%
----------	-------

White	39.5%
-------	-------

Multiracial	3.0%
-------------	------

Combined Student Groups (Student Gap Group)	77.1%
---	-------

Low Income	52.2%
------------	-------

Students with Disabilities	20.6%
----------------------------	-------

English Language Learners	5.7%
---------------------------	------

School Narrative

At Seaford Middle School we strive to balance our academic focus with a caring school environment. Our "Spotlight On Success" program offers positive incentives for students as a way to support our focus on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. Special "SOS" events are planned throughout the school year in order to recognize positive behavior choices. This program was the recipient of the 2010 Superstars In Education Award. A full slate of athletic and extracurricular activities are also offered to enhance our students' experiences while attending Seaford Middle School.

School Overall Performance



Academic Achievement

30% of Overall Performance

Students that are proficient have a greater likelihood of entry and success in education and career training beyond high school.



On Track to Graduation

10% of Overall Performance

Students who are on-track are more likely to complete high school on time, as well as succeed in education and training beyond high school.



Academic Growth

40% of Overall Performance

Schools with strong growth demonstrate a greater ability to improve student learning over time.



College & Career Preparation

20% of Overall Performance

Students that maintain or grow to proficiency are more likely to be prepared for success in education and career training beyond high school.

Legend: What do the stars mean?

Far Below



Needs Improvement



Approaching



Meets



Exceeds



School Environment

The 5Essentials Survey allows students and staff in grades 4-12 to share their perspectives on the essential conditions for learning.

EXHIBIT B⁴

Elementary/Middle School

Area/Measures	Weight	Points
<i>Academic Achievement</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>150</i>
Proficiency ELA	10%	50
Proficiency Math	10%	50
Proficiency Science	5%	25
Proficiency Social Studies	5%	25
<i>Growth</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>200</i>
Growth in ELA	20%	100
Growth in Math	20%	100
<i>On Track to Graduation</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>50</i>
Average Daily Attendance	10%	50
<i>College and Career Preparation</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>100</i>
Growth to Proficiency in ELA	10%	50
Growth to Proficiency in Math	10%	50
Total	100%	500

ENDNOTES

1. “Delaware School Success Framework Reference Guide,” Delaware Department of Education, page 8–10, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/404/Delaware%20School%20Success%20Framework%20Reference%20Document-Updated12.15-1.26.pdf>.
2. “Delaware School Accountability Growth Model FAQs,” Delaware Department of Education, pages 1 – 2, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/309/Delaware%20School%20Accountability%20Growth%20Model%20FAQ%2010142015.pdf>.
3. “Delaware School Success Framework Seaford Middle School,” Delaware Department of Education, page 1, accessed May 3, 2016, http://dssf.doe.k12.de.us/pdf/764_Seaford_Middle_School_2015.pdf.
4. “Delaware School Success Framework Reference Guide,” 6.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Although D.C.'s charter school authorizer uses growth to evaluate its schools, its state education agency's accountability system is based entirely on proficiency rates, giving all schools—but especially those run by the traditional school district—a strong incentive to ignore their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether the District's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-15 school year. We do not examine the quality of the District's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





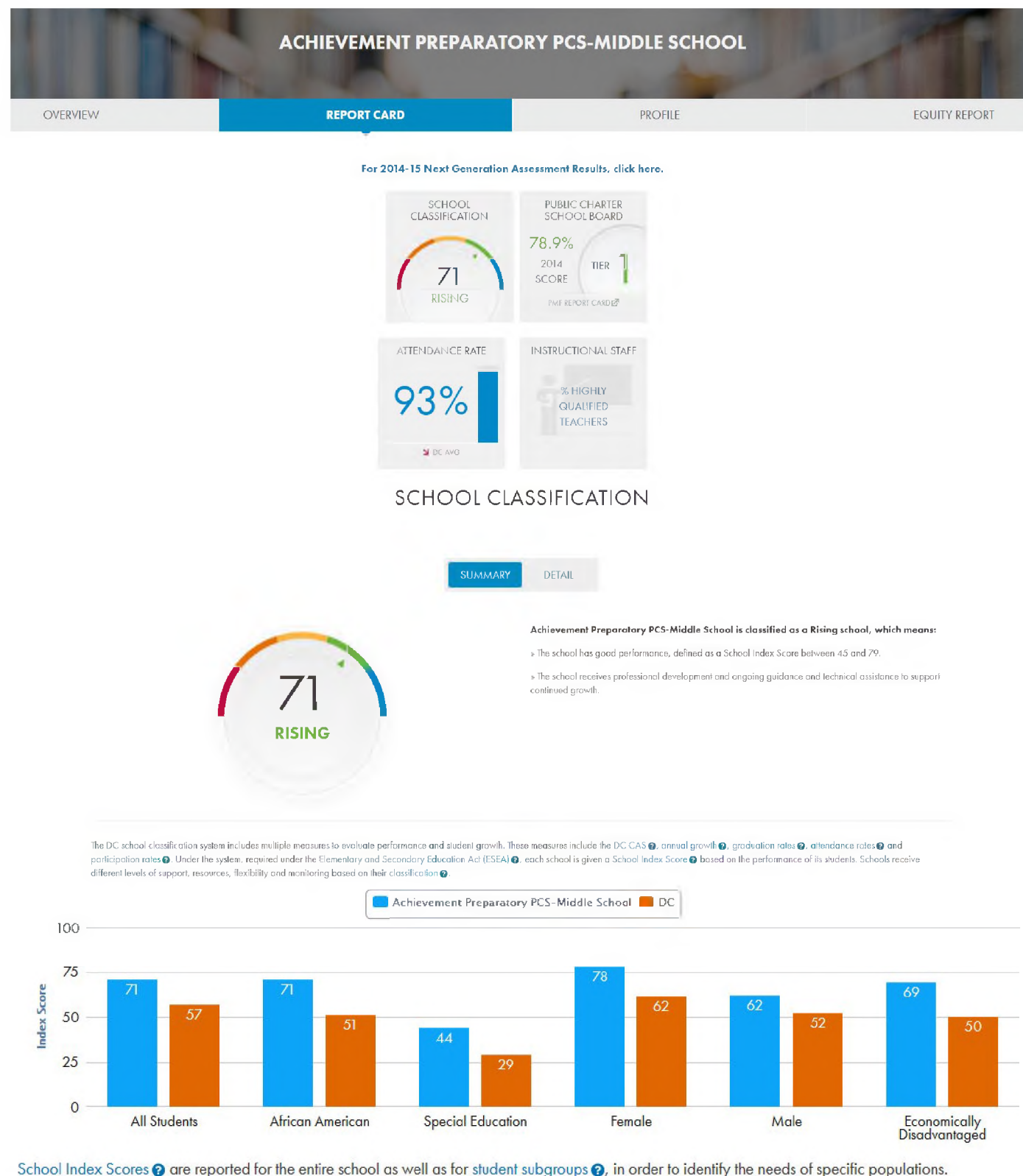
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		D.C. gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		The D.C. Public Charter School Board uses a student growth percentile model to rate charter schools’ growth. (See Exhibit A.) However, the state education agency’s current accountability system—used for both public charter schools and the District of Columbia Public Schools—doesn’t include student growth as a factor. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		D.C. does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Although growth accounts for 40 percent of the D.C. Public Charter School Board’s summative school ratings, it plays no part in determining school ratings in the state education agency’s current system. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

ENDNOTES

1. “Accountability Index Calculation and Status Determination,” District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, accessed June 12, 2016, http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/Student%20Level%20Index%20Data%20Final_O.pdf.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. “Achievement Preparatory PCS – Middle School,” District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, accessed June 12, 2016, <http://www.learndc.org/schoolprofiles/view?s=1100#reportcard>.

FLORIDA



Despite its pioneering use of student growth measures, Florida's accountability system does little to encourage schools to pay attention to their high achievers.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Florida's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015-16 school year. We do not examine the quality of Florida's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES FLORIDA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Florida does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Florida uses a categorical growth model. ² A categorical growth model compares the performance-level categories that students fall into from one year to the next.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Florida does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. ³
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 22 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A⁴

2016 Preliminary School Grades Overview

Each school is graded based on the components for which it has sufficient data

School grades provide an easily understandable way to measure the performance of a school. Parents and the general public can use the school grade and its components to understand how well each school is serving its students. Schools are graded A, B, C, D, or F.

Components: In 2015-16, a school's grade may include up to eleven components. There are four achievement components, four learning gains components, a middle school acceleration component, as well as components for graduation rate and high school acceleration. Each component is worth up to 100 points in the overall calculation.

Four Achievement Components: The four achievement components are English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. These components include student performance on statewide standardized assessments, including the comprehensive assessments, end-of-course (EOC) assessments, and Florida Alternate Assessments (FAA). The component measures the percentage of full-year enrolled students who achieved a passing score.

Four Learning Gains Components: These components are learning gains in English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as learning gains for the lowest performing 25% of students in English Language Arts and Mathematics. These components include student performance on statewide standardized assessments including the comprehensive assessments, EOC assessments, and the FSAA for the current year and the prior year. The components measure the percentage of full year enrolled students who achieved a learning gain from the prior year to the current year.

English Language Arts (FSA & FSAA)	Mathematics (FSA, EOCs, FSAA)	Science (NGSSS, EOC, FSAA)	Social Studies (EOCs)	Graduation Rate	Acceleration Success
Achievement (0% to 100%)	Achievement (0% to 100%)	Achievement (0% to 100%)	Achievement (0% to 100%)	4-year Graduation Rate (0% to 100%)	High School (AP, IB, AICE, Dual Enrollment or Industry Certification) (0% to 100%)
Learning Gains (0% to 100%)	Learning Gains (0% to 100%)				Industry Certification) (0% to 100%)
Learning Gains of the Lowest 25% (0% to 100%)	Learning Gains of the Lowest 25% (0% to 100%)				Middle School (EOCs or Industry Certification) (0% to 100%)

Middle School Acceleration: This component is based on the percentage of eligible students who passed a high school level EOC assessment or industry certification.

Graduation Rate: The graduation rate is based on an adjusted cohort of ninth grade students and the rate measures whether the students graduate within four years.

High School Acceleration: This component is based on the percentage of graduates from the graduation rate cohort who earned a score on an acceleration examination (AP, IB, or AICE) or a grade in a dual enrollment course that qualified students for college credit or earned an industry certification.

School Grades Calculation: The number of points earned for each component is added together and divided by the total number of available points to determine the percentage of points earned.

School Grading Scale: A = 62% of points or greater, B = 54% to 61% of points, C = 41% to 53% of points, D = 32% to 40% of points, F = 31% of points or less

Percent Tested: Schools must test 95% of their students.



ENDNOTES

1. “2014–2015 Guide to Calculating Informational Baseline School and District Grades,” Florida Department of Education, pages 9–11, accessed May 4, 2016, <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/1415/SchoolGradesCalcGuide15.pdf>.
2. *Ibid*, 16.
3. “Reporting Florida’s Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in Compliance with ESEA Flexibility Requirements Guide to Calculations for 2013–14,” Florida Department of Education, page 2, accessed May 4, 2016, <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/1314/Amo.pdf>.
4. “2016 Informational Baseline School Grade Overview,” Florida Department of Education, accessed July 29, 2016, <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/1516/SchoolGradesOverview16.pdf>.

GEORGIA



TWO STARS OUT OF FOUR

Georgia's accountability system is better for high achievers than most states' systems. Assigning more weight to growth would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Georgia's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015-16 school year. We do not examine the quality of Georgia's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES GEORGIA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Georgia gives additional credit for students achieving at a “distinguished” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Georgia uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Georgia does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately.
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Georgia comes close. “Growth for all students” counts for 40 percent of summative school ratings. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A³

Scoring



Component	Points (100)
Achievement	50 points
Content Mastery	40% = 20 points
Post Readiness	30% = 15 points
Graduation Rate (or predictor)	30% = 15 points
Progress	40 points
Achievement Gap	10 points
Challenge Points	Up to 10 points

Notes:

- Points are equally distributed among indicators within a section
 - Exception: High school graduation rate – 4-year cohort grad rate is worth 2/3 of the points while 5-year cohort grad rate is worth 1/3 of the points

ENDNOTES

1. “Georgia Department of Education: 2015 and 2016 CCRPI – Summary of Changes,” page 1, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Documents/Indicators%20and%20Targets/SummaryofChanges.pdf>.
2. “A Guide to the Georgia Student Growth Model,” accessed July 14, 2016, <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Documents/GSGM/SGPGuide%20121515.pdf>.
3. “Understanding the CCRPI: Metro Area Instructional Leadership Conference: February 25, 2016,” Georgia Department of Education, page 15, accessed July 15, 2016, <http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Documents/Webinars and Presentations/2016-02-24 Understanding the CCRPI ILC 022516.pptx>.

HAWAII



Hawaii's accountability system is easy to understand but does little to encourage schools to focus on high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Hawaii's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015-16 school. We do not examine the quality of Hawaii's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES HAWAII’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?



INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Hawaii does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level, except when it comes to third-grade reading. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Hawaii uses a student growth percentile model. ¹ A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Hawaii does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” accounts for 35 percent of elementary school ratings and just 27.5 percent of middle school ratings. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A²

STRIVE HI INDEX POINTS						
	Elementary		Middle/Intermediate		High	
Achievement	160 points		130 points		80 points	
	ELA proficiency rate	70	ELA proficiency rate	55	ELA proficiency rate	30
	Math proficiency rate	70	Math proficiency rate	55	Math proficiency rate	30
	Science proficiency rate	20	Science proficiency rate	20	Science proficiency rate	20
Growth	140 points		110 points		60 points	
	ELA median SGP	70	ELA median SGP	55	ELA median SGP	30
	Math median SGP	70	Math median SGP	55	Math median SGP	30
Readiness	50 points		100 points		200 points	
	Chronic Absenteeism rate	50	College & Career Readiness Assessment (CCRA)	60	4-yr grad rate	100
					CCRA	80
			% earning HS credit for Algebra I	40	College-going rate	10
					5-yr grad rate	10
Achievement Gap	50 points		60 points		60 points	
	ELA Current Year Gap rate	25	ELA Current Year Gap rate	30	ELA Current Year Gap rate	30
	Math Current Year Gap rate	25	Math Current Year Gap rate	30	Math Current Year Gap rate	30
Total	400 points		400 points		400 points	

BONUS POINTS					
Elementary	Points	Middle	Points	High	Points
Retention rate	5	Chronic Absenteeism rate	10	Chronic Absenteeism rate	5
Percent of 3 rd grade students with advanced Reading level	5			Percent of students passing AP, CTE, IB, Dual Credit classes	5

EXHIBIT B³

Hawaii Public Schools School Year 2014–2015 Strive HI School Performance Report

Aiea Intermediate

307 points of 400 points

School Year 2014–2015: Continuous Improvement

Trigger: None

School Year 2013–2014: Continuous Improvement



ENDNOTES

1. "Hawaii Growth Model Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)," Hawaii State Department of Education, page 9, accessed July 21, 2016, https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/StriveHIIndexReports/sgp_faq_2013-06-04.pdf.
2. "Strive HI System Index," Hawaii State Department of Education, accessed May 21, 2016, <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/AdvancingEducation/StriveHISystemIndex/Pages/Strive-HI-System-Index.aspx>
3. "Hawaii Public Schools School Year 2014-2015 Strive HI School Performance Report- Aiea Intermediate," Hawaii State Department of Education, accessed August 2, 2016, <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/Reports/StriveHIAieaInt15.pdf>.

IDAHO



Idaho's accountability system puts a strong emphasis on growth, which gives schools an incentive to focus on all of their students. Rewarding schools that help students achieve at an "advanced" level would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest "proficiency" bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry "substantial" weight and, in the aggregate, must count "much more" than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Idaho's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-14 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Idaho's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES IDAHO’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Idaho does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Idaho uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Idaho does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for 50 percent of a school’s summative rating. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

ELA	2013-2014					2014-2015				
	% Adv	% Prof	% Basic	% BB	% Tested	% Adv	% Prof	% Basic	% BB	% Tested
All Students	***	***	***	***	98.8 %	6.0 %	28.7 %	31.8 %	33.5 %	99.6 %
Black / African American	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Asian or Pacific Islander	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	44.0 %	***	***
American Indian or Alaskan Native	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Hispanic or Latino	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	33.3 %	43.7 %	***
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
White	***	***	***	***	***	***	32.7 %	***	30.4 %	***
Two Or More Races	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
LEP	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Not LEP	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	30.0 %	***
Economically Disadvantaged	***	***	***	***	***	2.9 %	22.7 %	34.0 %	40.4 %	***
Not Economically Disadvantaged	***	***	***	***	***	12.7 %	41.6 %	27.2 %	18.5 %	***
Students with Disabilities	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	74.6 %	***
Students without Disabilities	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	33.8 %	27.7 %	***
Migrant	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Homeless	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	52.0 %	***
Male	***	***	***	***	***	4.8 %	22.1 %	36.0 %	37.0 %	***
Female	***	***	***	***	***	7.4 %	36.0 %	27.1 %	29.5 %	***
At-Risk	***	***	***	***	***	3.1 %	23.7 %	33.4 %	39.8 %	***
Not At-Risk	***	***	***	***	***	16.0 %	45.6 %	26.4 %	12.0 %	***

ENDNOTES

1. “Star Rating Accountability and Business System Rules” Idaho Department of Education, accessed March 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160429202808/http://sde.idaho.gov/topics/accountability/files/appeals/Star-Rating-Accountability-System-Business-Rules.pdf>.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Excerpt from Sample Idaho School Report Card, Fairmont Junior High School: <https://apps.sde.idaho.gov/ReportCard/SchoolYear/21>.

ILLINOIS



Illinois includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Illinois' accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-14 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Illinois' standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES ILLINOIS’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




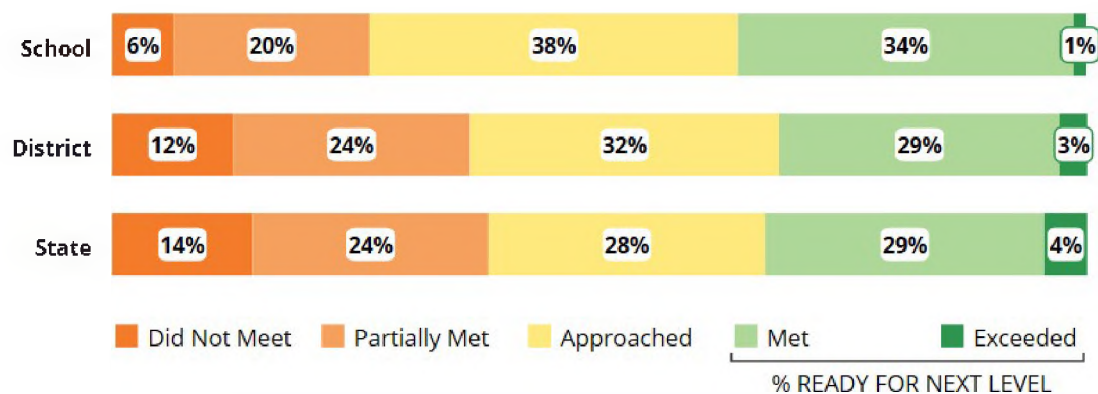
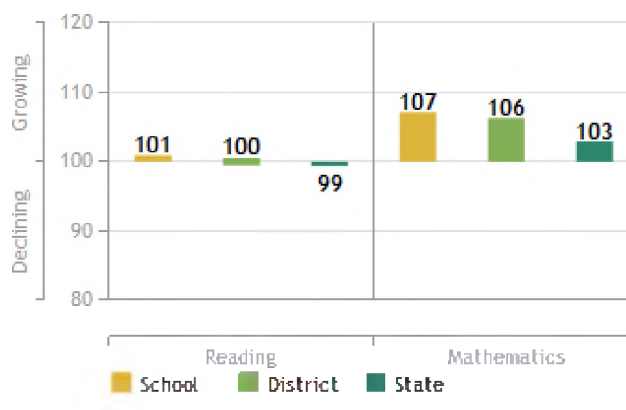
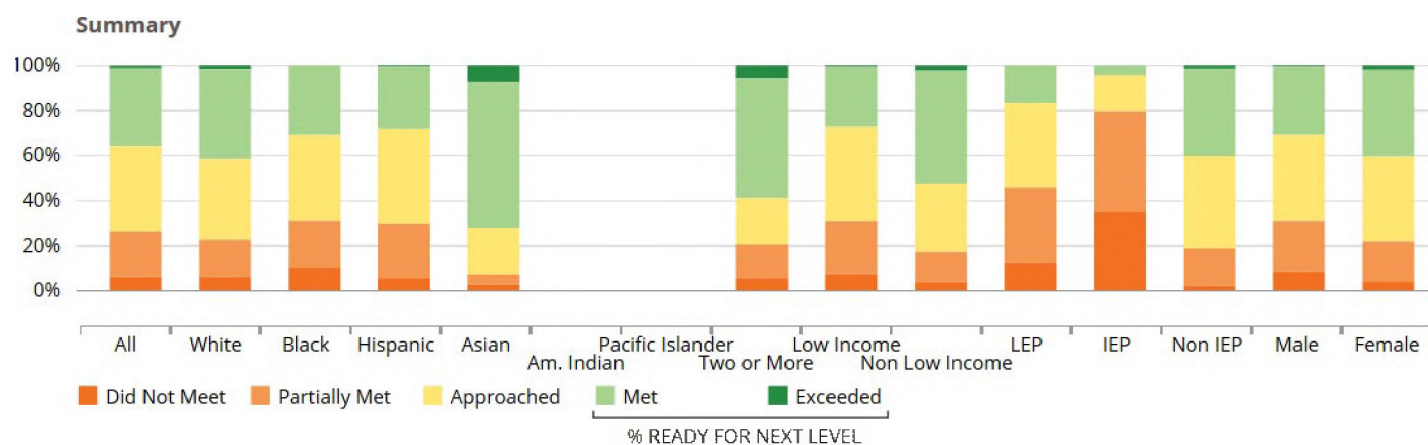
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Illinois does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level, though it does do a good job of reporting these data. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Illinois uses a categorical growth model. ¹ A categorical growth model compares the performance-level categories that students fall into from one year to the next. (See Exhibit B.)
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Illinois does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	Illinois does not have a system for calculating summative school ratings.

EXHIBIT A²EXHIBIT B³EXHIBIT C⁴

ENDNOTES

1. “Fact Sheet: New Growth Model Using Value Tables,” Illinois State Board of Education, access July 12, 2016, <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/GMWG/pdf/gmvt-fact-sheet-0813.pdf>.
2. “A Vito Martinez Middle School,” Illinois Department of Education, accessed August 1, 2016, <http://www.illinoisreportcard.com/School.aspx?schoolId=56099365U261003>.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

INDIANA



Indiana includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Indiana's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015-16 school year. We do not examine the quality of Indiana's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES INDIANA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Indiana does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Indiana uses a categorical growth model. A categorical growth model compares the performance-level categories that students fall into from one year to the next. (See Exhibit A.)
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Indiana does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately.
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Growth counts for 50 percent of a school’s summative rating, but students in the lowest achievement quartile receive far more weight than other students. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A²

Student GROWTH: Sample Calculation

Elementary School ABC (Grades 3-5)

Example (English/Language Arts):

Top 75% group:

80 students were enrolled for 162 days and had consecutive, valid E/LA assessment scores

Each of the 80 students is assigned a point value based on the table

Total of all points values = 8,000

Top 75% E/LA Growth Score = $(8,000 / 80) = 100.0$

Bottom 25% group:

27 students were enrolled for 162 days and had consecutive, valid E/LA assessment scores

Each of the 27 students is assigned a point value based on the table

Total of all points values = 2,025

Bottom 25% E/LA Growth Score = $(2,025 / 27) = 75.0$

E/LA Growth Score = $100.0 + 75.0 / 2 = 87.5$ points

Math growth score is calculated the same way

For schools **without graduates**, overall growth score = E/LA Growth Score + Math Growth Score / 2

Student GROWTH: Sample Calculation

Growth Score

Example 1: In the prior year, Student A was in the Did Not Pass 3 category. Student A's observed growth score from last year to this year was 32. Student A is assigned 50 points.

Prior Year Status	SAMPLE Observed Growth					
	Negative/Low Movement		Static/Typical/Normal Movement		Positive/High Movement	
	Target Range	Points	Target Range	Points	Target Range	Points
Pass+ 2	1-41	75	42-66	125	67-99	150
Pass+ 1	1-39	75	40-64	125	65-99	150
Pass 3	1-36	50	37-61	100	62-99	125
Pass 2	1-34	50	35-59	100	60-99	125
Pass 1	1-31	50	32-56	100	57-99	125
Did Not Pass 3	1-29	0	30-54	50	55-99	100
Did Not Pass 2	1-26	0	27-51	50	52-99	100
Did Not Pass 1	1-24	0	25-49	50	50-99	100

Example 2: In the prior year, Student B was in the Pass+ 1 category. Student B's observed growth score from last year to this year was 66. Student B is assigned 150 points.

Add together all points assigned and divide by total number of students who received points. Calculate for Bottom 25% and Top 75% for both English/Language Arts and Math.

EXHIBIT B³

CALCULATING THE FINAL GRADE

To calculate the final A-F grade:

- For schools that DO NOT have grade 12:
 $(\text{Overall Performance Score} * 50\%) + (\text{Overall Growth Score} * 50\%) = \text{Final Points}$
- For schools that DO have grade 12 but DO NOT have any combination of grades K-8:
 $(\text{Overall Performance Score} * 20\%) + (\text{Overall Growth Score} * 20\%) +$
 $(\text{Multiple Measures Score} * 60\%) = \text{Final Points}$
- For schools that DO have grades 3-10 and 12:
 Calculate % of students in the school enrolled in grades 3-8 (EW_{3-8})
 Calculate % of students in the school enrolled in grades 9-12 (EW_{9-12})
Overall performance score = $[(EW_{3-8} * 50\% * \text{Performance score}) + (EW_{9-12} * 20\% * \text{Performance score})]$
Overall growth score = $[(EW_{3-8} * 50\% * \text{Growth score}) + (EW_{9-12} * 20\% * \text{Growth score})]$
Overall MM score = $(EW_{9-12} * 60\% * \text{Multiple Measures score})$
Final Grade = Overall performance score + overall growth score + overall multiple measures score

ENDNOTES

1. “The NEW A–F Accountability System,” Indiana Department of Education, accessed June 28, 2016, page 7, <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/accountability/accountability-presentationadvanced.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 13–14.
3. Ibid, 23.

IOWA



Iowa includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Iowa's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Iowa's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES IOWA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?


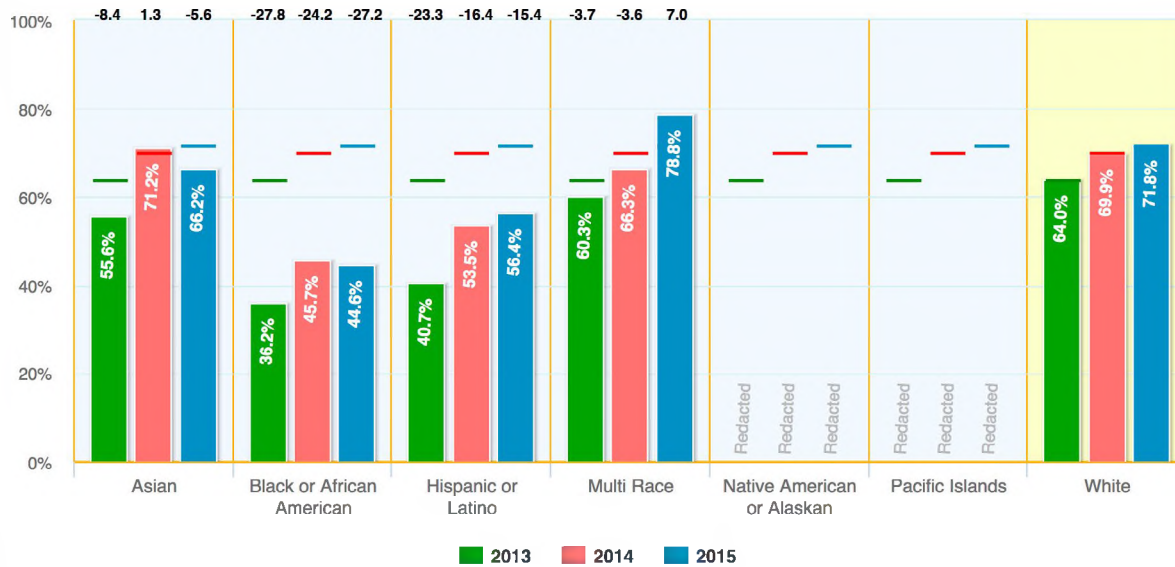
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Iowa does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Iowa uses a gain score model. ² A gain score model measures the absolute improvement in students’ achievement (in points) using a common scale.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Iowa does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 25 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A^{3,4}

Last Three Years: Proficiency Breakdown by Student Group

Subgroups with less than 20 students are intentionally redacted



Last Three Years: Proficiency Breakdown by Program Group

Subgroups with less than 20 students are intentionally redacted

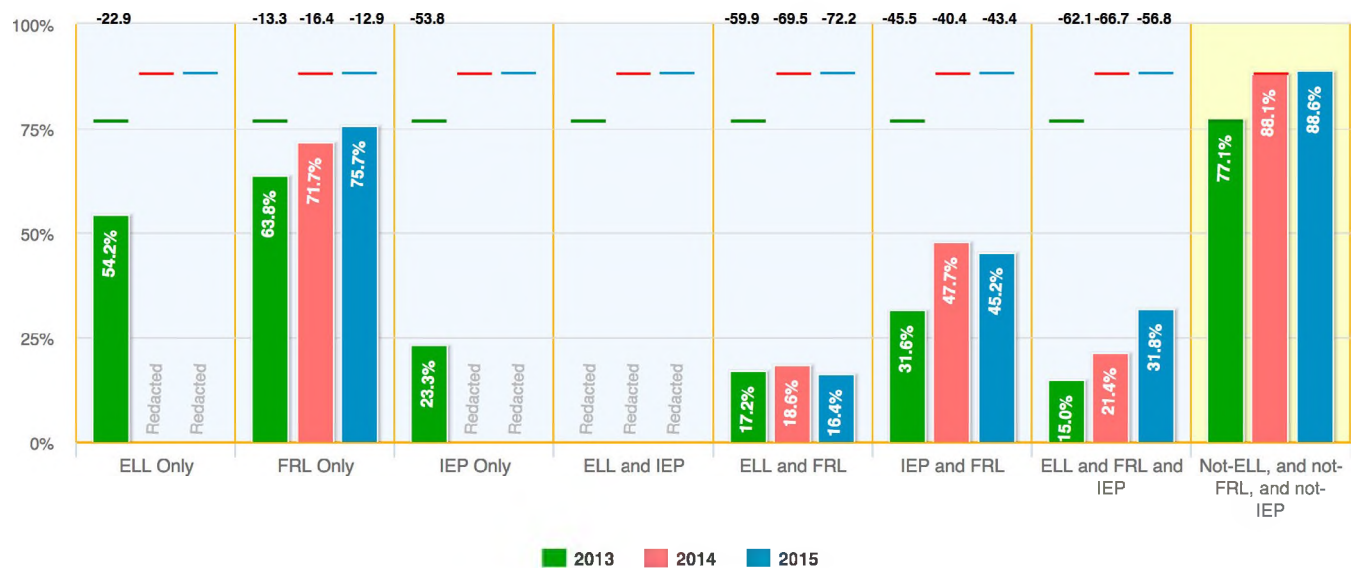


EXHIBIT B⁵

Measures	High School	Middle School	Elementary School
Proficiency	22.2%	25.0%	28.6%
Closing Achievement Gap	22.2%	25.0%	28.6%
College and Career Ready Growth	11.1%	12.5%	14.3%
Annual Expected Growth	11.1%	12.5%	14.3%
College and Career Readiness	11.1%	12.5%	NA
Graduation Rate	11.1%	NA	NA
Attendance	5.6%	6.3%	7.1%
Staff Retention	5.6%	6.3%	7.1%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

ENDNOTES

1. "Iowa School Report Card-Technical Guide," Iowa Department of Education, page 10, accessed May 3, 2016, http://reports.educateiowa.gov/schoolreportcard/content/Technical%20Guide-Iowa%20Report%20Card%20v1_1.pdf.
2. Ibid.
3. "Iowa School Report Card – Weeks Middle School," Iowa Department of Education, accessed May 4, 2016, <http://reports.educateiowa.gov/schoolreportcard/home/gap2?yr=2015&sch=17370281&type=middle&measure=Gap2>.
4. Ibid.
5. "Iowa School Report Card-Technical Guide," 6.

KANSAS



Kansas includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Kansas' accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Kansas' standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES KANSAS’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




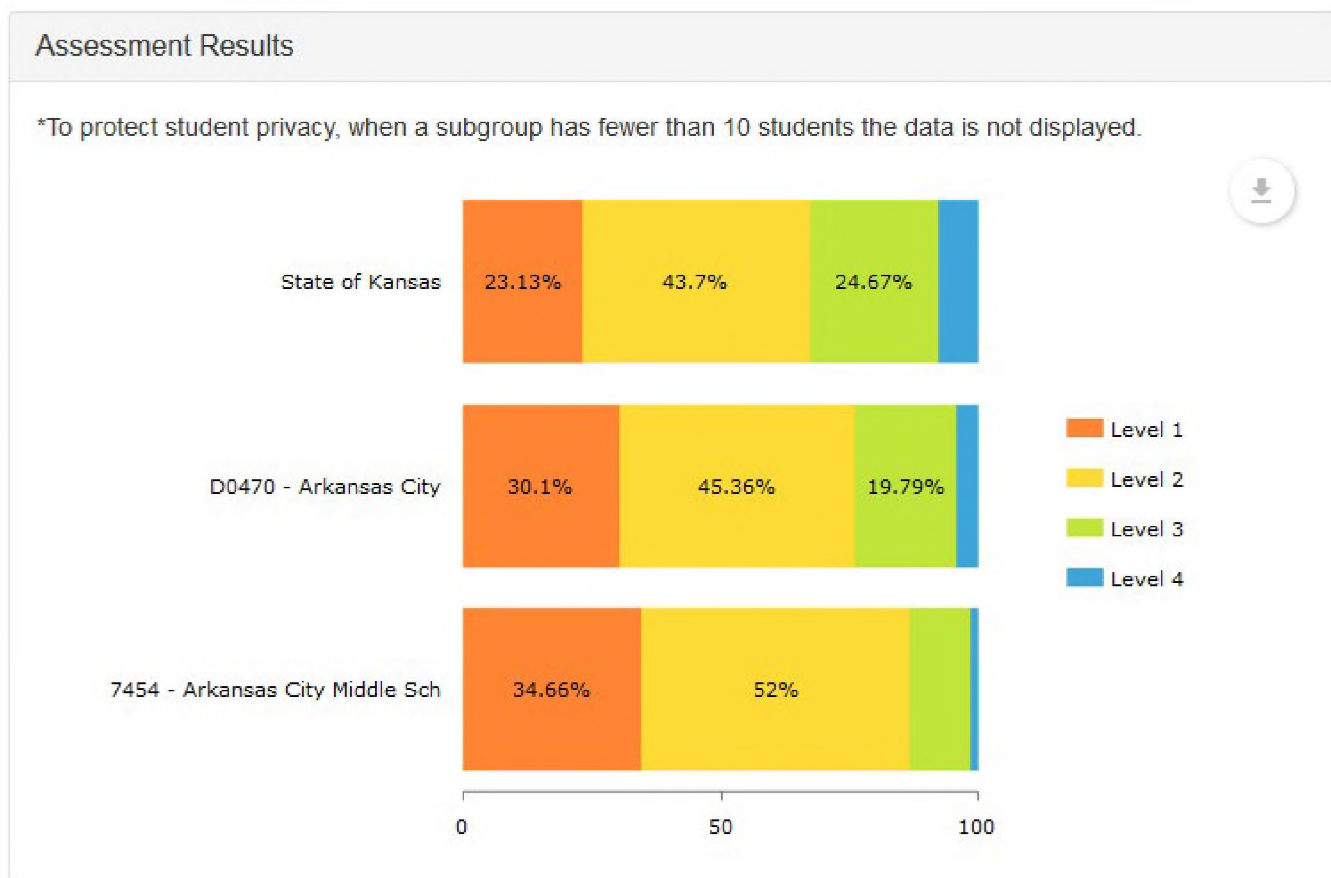
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Kansas does not give additional credit for students achieving at an advanced level, though it does do a good job of reporting these data. ¹ (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Kansas uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Kansas does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	Kansas does not have a system for calculating summative school ratings.

EXHIBIT A³

Next

ENDNOTES

1. "Kansas Report Card 2014–15," Kansas Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, http://ksreportcard.ksde.org/home.aspx?org_no=DO470&bldg_no=7454&rptType=1.
2. "What Are the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for Growth?" Kansas Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/FactSheets/FactSheet-Waiver-WhatAreAMOGrowth.pdf>.
3. "Kansas Report Card 2014-15."
4. Ibid.

KENTUCKY



*Kentucky's accountability system rewards schools that help students achieve at an advanced level.
Assigning more weight to growth would further improve the system.*

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Kentucky's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Kentucky's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES KENTUCKY’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Kentucky gives additional credit for students achieving at a “distinguished” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Kentucky uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Kentucky does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for 40 percent of elementary school ratings and just 28 percent of middle school ratings. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

K-PREP - Reading - Middle School - Performance Level																									
	Enrollment			Number Tested			Participation Rate			Percent Novice			Percent Apprentice			Percent Proficient			Percent Distinguished			Percent Proficient/Distinguished			
Grade	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State	
► All Students	599	599	150,378	599	599	150,251	100.0	100.0	99.9	18.9	18.9	21.1	29.5	29.5	25.1	40.6	40.6	37.2	11.0	11.0	16.7	51.6	51.6	53.8	
► Male	303	303	77,248	303	303	77,177	100.0	100.0	99.9	19.1	19.1	25.3	33.0	33.0	26.0	38.3	38.3	34.7	9.6	9.6	13.9	47.9	47.9	48.7	
► Female	296	296	73,120	296	296	73,064	100.0	100.0	99.9	18.6	18.6	16.6	26.0	26.0	24.1	42.9	42.9	39.8	12.5	12.5	19.5	55.4	55.4	59.3	
► White (Non-Hispanic)	561	561	120,069	561	561	119,995	100.0	100.0	99.9	18.0	18.0	18.2	29.4	29.4	24.5	41.0	41.0	39.0	11.6	11.6	18.3	52.6	52.6	57.4	
► African American	9*	9*	16,054	9*	9*	16,033	100.0	100.0	99.9			39.8			28.8			25.6			5.8			31.4	
► Hispanic	9*	9*	7,618	9*	9*	7,595	100.0	100.0	99.7			27.7			28.6			33.6			10.0			43.6	
► Asian	2*	2*	2,286	2*	2*	2,281	100.0	100.0	99.8			15.0			15.7			36.6			32.7			69.4	
► American Indian or Alaska Native	2*	2*	174	2*	2*	173	100.0	100.0	99.4			24.3			23.1			36.4			16.2			52.6	
► Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander			136			135			99.3			27.4			22.2			37.8			12.6			50.4	
► Two or more races	16	16	4,024	16	16	4,022	100.0	100.0	100.0	37.5	37.5	23.9	37.5	37.5	27.8	25.0	25.0	35.2	0.0	0.0	13.0	25.0	25.0	48.2	
► Migrant	6*	6*	340	6*	6*	339	100.0	100.0	99.7			35.1			28.9			32.2			3.8			36.0	
► Limited English Proficiency	1*	1*	2,726	1*	1*	2,700	100.0	100.0	99.0			64.3			24.3			10.4			1.0			11.4	
► Free/Reduced-Price Meals	399	399	90,220	399	399	90,131	100.0	100.0	99.9	24.3	24.3	28.3	32.8	32.8	28.9	36.3	36.3	33.3	6.5	6.5	9.6	42.9	42.9	42.9	
► Disability-With IEP (Total)	56	56	17,454	56	56	17,434	100.0	100.0	99.9	60.7	60.7	52.5	23.2	23.2	26.4	16.1	16.1	17.0	0.0	0.0	4.1	16.1	16.1	21.1	
► Disability-With IEP (not including Alternate)	45	45	15,640	45	45	15,620	100.0	100.0	99.9	71.1	71.1	56.4	15.6	15.6	24.4	13.3	13.3	15.6	0.0	0.0	3.6	13.3	13.3	19.2	
► Disability-With Accommodation (not including Alternate)	42*	42*	12,788	42*	42*	12,780	100.0	100.0	99.9			57.8			24.6			14.5			3.1			17.6	
► Disability-Alternate Only	11	11	1,814	11	11	1,814	100.0	100.0	100.0	18.2	18.2	19.0	54.5	54.5	43.6	27.3	27.3	28.6	0.0	0.0	8.8	27.3	27.3	37.4	
► Gap Group (non-duplicated)	404	404	97,815	404	404	97,710	100.0	100.0	99.9	24.3	24.3	28.4	32.7	32.7	28.7	36.6	36.6	33.1	6.4	6.4	9.8	43.1	43.1	42.8	

EXHIBIT B⁴**How will student performance be used for accountability?**

Next-Generation Learners is the main component of Unbridled Learning and is based on many measures of student performance on various tests. Points will be awarded based on how well a school performs on each measure.

- **Achievement** – Just as in the past, elementary and middle school students' scores will be labeled as novice, apprentice, proficient or distinguished. Kentucky's goal is 100 percent proficiency for all students. At high school, achievement is based on end-of-course exams and an on-demand writing test.
- **Gap** – Schools will compare test results for African-American, Hispanic, Native American, special education, low income and limited English proficiency students, combined into one gap group, to results for other students who aren't in those categories.
- **Growth** – A statistical program will measure how much students' scores are improving from one year to the next.
- **College/Career Readiness** – Schools and districts will provide information about how many students are ready for college and/or careers, based on test scores and certifications earned.
- **Graduation Rate** – Schools and districts will report how many students graduate within four years of high school.

Calculating Next-Generation Learner Score

	Elementary	Middle	High
Achievement	30%	28%	20%
Gap	30%	28%	20%
Growth	40%	28%	20%
Readiness for College/Career	n/a	16%	20%
Graduation Rate	n/a	n/a	20%

ENDNOTES

1. “Unbridled learning accountability model,” Kentucky Department of Education, page 5, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://education.ky.gov/comm/ul/documents/white%20paper%20062612%20final.pdf>.
2. “PGES Student Growth,” Kentucky Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://education.ky.gov/teachers/pges/tpges/pages/tpges-student-growth-page.aspx>.
3. “Kentucky School Report Card,” Kentucky Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <https://applications.education.ky.gov/src/Accountability.aspx>.
4. “A Parent’s Guide to School Accountability in Kentucky,” Kentucky Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://education.ky.gov/comm/UL/Documents/Parents%20Guide%20Accountability%20082812.pdf>.

LOUISIANA



Louisiana's accountability system rewards schools that help students achieve at an advanced level. But because growth for proficient students doesn't factor into summative school ratings, there is still an incentive for schools to ignore their high achievers.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Louisiana's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Louisiana's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES LOUISIANA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?


INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Louisiana gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Louisiana uses a multivariate value-added model. However, this model is only used to rate the growth of students who are below the standard for proficiency. ¹
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Louisiana does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Although schools can earn bonus points for achieving exceptional growth with non-proficient students, “growth for all students” does not count toward a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A²

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SCORE

School Performance Scores are based on student achievement, academic indicators and measures of career and college readiness, such as Carnegie credits earned through 9th grade, graduation rates, and earning Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Dual Enrollment.

- **Elementary schools (K-5):** 100 percent of the school grade is based on student achievement on annual assessments in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Schools may also earn points for significant improvement with students who are academically behind.
- **Middle schools (7-8):** 95 percent of the school grade is based on student achievement on annual assessments with the final 5 percent based on credits earned through the end of students' 9th grade year. Schools may also earn points for significant improvement with students who are academically behind.
- **High schools (9-12):** Half of the school grade is based on student achievement (25 percent on the ACT and 25 percent on End-of-Course assessments); Half of the school grade is based on graduation (25 percent on the graduation index, which rewards achievements like Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam credit, and 25 percent on the cohort graduation rate, the percentage of students graduating in four years). Schools may also earn points for significant improvement with students who are academically behind.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Elementary and middle schools earn points for student achievement on annual assessments in English language arts, math, science and social studies. Total points are divided by the total number of tests to calculate the School Performance Score. In elementary school, these points comprise 100% of the school grade. In schools with an 8th grade, these points comprise 95% of the school grade. Schools may also earn points for significant improvement with students who are academically behind.

Student Achievement Score	Points Per Student
Level 5/Advanced	150
Level 4/Mastery	125
Level 3/Basic	100
Level 2/Approaching Basic	0
Level 1/Unsatisfactory	0

NOTE: English language arts and math scores are weighted double in calculations for school performance scores. Schools may earn points for students scoring Approaching Basic or Unsatisfactory in the prior year through **progress points** (see definition below).

SCHOOLS WITH 8TH GRADE

Schools with 8th grade also earn points for the number of credits each student accumulates by the end of 9th grade. Total points are divided by the number of students to calculate a school average. These points comprise 5% of the school grade.

Course Credits	Points Per Student
6	150
5.5	125
5	100
4.5	75
4	50
3.5	25
3 or less	0
3 rd year 8 th grade student	0
Dropout	0

EXHIBIT B³

ARMSTRONG MIDDLE SCHOOL

2014-2015 • Acadia Parish • Grades 6-8 • 001001

D

383 Enrolled • 8% Special Education • 82% Economically Disadvantaged

SPS = 53.5

HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM ON STATE ASSESSMENTS?

Students performing at Basic may need additional support to be fully prepared for the next level of studies. Students performing at Mastery and above have met or exceeded the expectations, and are well prepared for the next level of studies. By 2025, A-rated schools must have an average performance of Mastery.

SCORE	SCHOOL	DISTRICT	STATE
MASTERY +	14%	28%	27%
BASIC +	45%	67%	65%

NOTE: The table above includes students who take LAA 1. View how their performance is measured [here](#).

HOW DID DIFFERENT GROUPS OF STUDENTS PERFORM?

SCORE	MINORITY STUDENTS			STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES			ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS		
	SCHOOL	DISTRICT	STATE	SCHOOL	DISTRICT	STATE	SCHOOL	DISTRICT	STATE
MASTERY +	8%	15%	18%	<5%	7%	10%	11%	21%	19%
BASIC +	35%	49%	55%	20%	32%	35%	40%	61%	57%


HOW MANY CREDITS DID STUDENTS EARN BY THE END OF FRESHMAN YEAR?

Schools with grade 8 are accountable for the number of credits earned and the number of students who dropout by the end of grade 9.

CREDITS	SCHOOL	DISTRICT	STATE
6 +	75%	86%	83%

DID THIS SCHOOL MAKE PROGRESS WITH STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLED ACADEMICALLY?

Schools earn a maximum of 10 progress points for students previously non-proficient but who exceeded expectations in the current year.

	NON-PROFICIENT STUDENTS	EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS	DISTRICT	STATE	TOTAL POINTS EARNED	14/15 vs 13/14
ELA	138	43%	50%	50%	0.0	 DECLINING
MATH	128	38%	48%	49%		

2013-2014		2014-2015		ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE INFORMATION	DATA CENTER
D	SPS 64.5	D	SPS 53.5		

During transition years (2013-2016), expectations for all students have been raised by increasing the quality of ELA and math assessments and phasing out of the LAA 2 assessments. During this transitional learning year, a curve policy is in place to ensure that the distribution of letter grades remains stable. More information about transition policies is available [here](#).

ENDNOTES

1. “Value-Added Model,” Louisiana Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/teaching/value-added-model>.
2. “School Performance Score,” Louisiana Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/accountability/school-performance-scores>.
3. “Armstrong Middle School,” Louisiana Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/data/reportcards/2015/>.

MAINE



Maine includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Maine's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Maine's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MAINE’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Maine does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Maine uses a categorical growth model. ² A categorical growth model compares the performance-level categories that students fall into from one year to the next.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Maine does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 25 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Years <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LEP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Free/Reduced Lunch <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Education	Year(s): 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 LEP: Yes, No Free/Reduced Lunch: Yes, No Gender(s): Female, Male Race(s): African American / Black, American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian (2011 or later only), Asian or Pacific Islander (before 2011 only), Caucasian / White, Hispanic, More Than One Race (2011 or later only), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (2011 or later only) Special Education: Enrolled, Not Enrolled
---	--

Run Report

Reset

[Definitions](#) [Excel](#) [PDF](#) [ESU](#)

Auburn Public Schools
Auburn Middle School

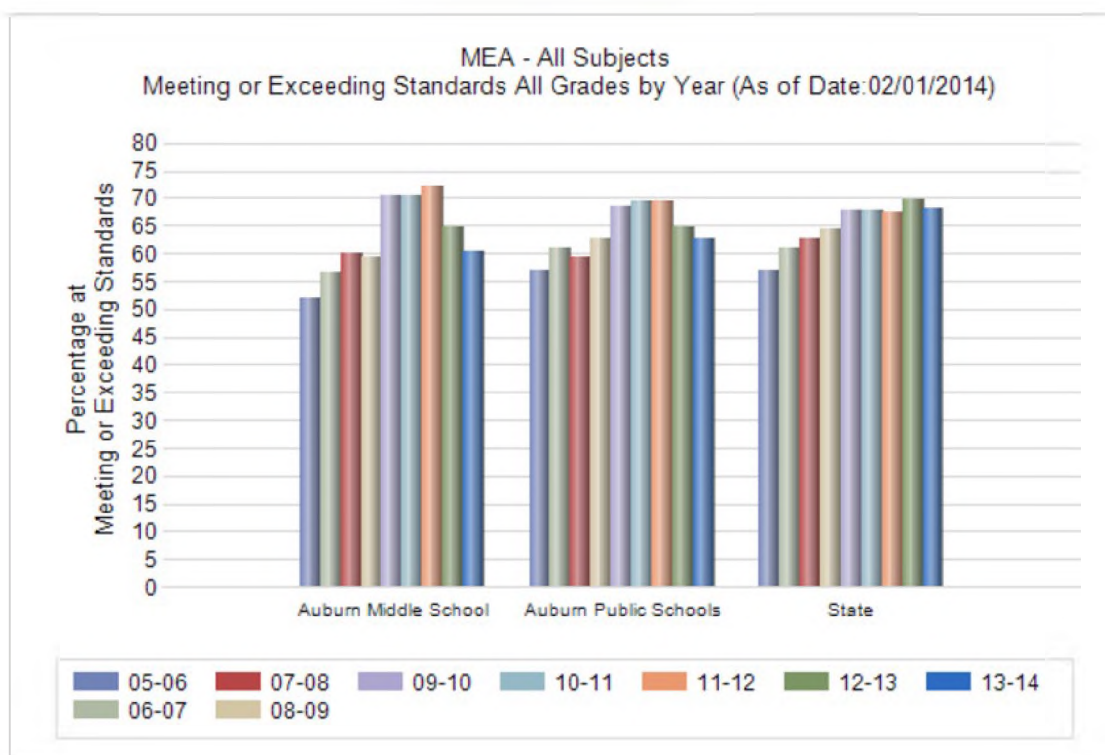


EXHIBIT B⁴

School Report Card 2014

Auburn Middle School

This School's Grade

Principal JAMES HAND
(207) 333-6655Superintendent KATHERINE GRONDIN
(207) 784-6431School Website www.auburnschl.edu/education/school/school.php?sectionid=4

Grades 7-8

D

Previous Grade: D

Measures

Proficiency

Math 47.0%

The percentage of students who scored proficient or above on the 2013-14 NECAP and the 2012-13 PAAP.

Reading 55.9%

The percentage of students who scored proficient or above on the 2013-14 NECAP and the 2012-13 PAAP.

Growth

Math - All Students 54.8

Measures the collective growth of individual students, that is, how well did individual students (not the average of all students) improve from the previous year when they took the test in the previous grade level. Generally, a 50 would indicate that half of all students advanced a level of proficiency OR maintained a level at or above proficiency. Divide by 2 to get the total school points.

Reading - All Students 64.4

Measures the collective growth of individual students, that is, how well did individual students (not the average of all students) improve from the previous year when they took the test in the previous grade level. Generally, a 50 would indicate that half of all students advanced a level of proficiency OR maintained a level at or above proficiency. Divide by 2 to get the total school points.

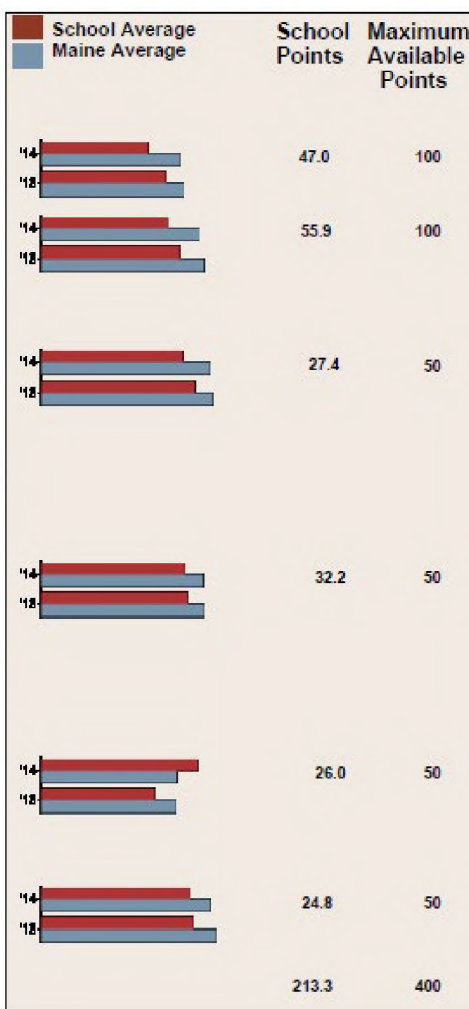
Bottom 25% - Math 52.0

Growth among students who - in the previous testing year - scored in the bottom 25%. That is, what was the growth among students who were particularly struggling in the previous year to the most recent year. Divide by 2 to get the total school points.

Bottom 25% - Reading 49.6

Growth among students who - in the previous testing year - scored in the bottom 25%. That is, what was the growth among students who were particularly struggling in the previous year to the most recent year. Divide by 2 to get the total school points.

Totals

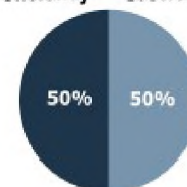


How the points translate to a letter grade

A = 300 plus
B = 280
C = 225
D = 200
F = less than 200

Calculating the Score

Proficiency Growth



ENDNOTES

1. "Methodology," Maine Department of Education, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.maine.gov/doe/schoolreportcards/resources/methodology.html>.
2. Ibid.
3. "Auburn Middle School MEA – All Subjects Performance Report," Maine Department of Education Data Warehouse, accessed May 17, 2016, http://dw.education.maine.gov/DirectoryManager/Web/maine_report/AssessmentReportViewer.aspx.
4. "Auburn Middle School Snapshot Report," Maine Department of Education Data Warehouse, accessed May 17, 2016, http://dw.education.maine.gov/DirectoryManager/Web/Maine_report/SnapshotGeneral.aspx.

MARYLAND



With an accountability system based on proficiency rates, Maryland gives schools no incentive to pay attention to their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Maryland's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year. We do not examine the quality of Maryland's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MARYLAND’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?


INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Maryland does not give additional credit for students achieving at an advanced level, though it does report these data. ¹ (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Maryland does not rate schools’ growth. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Maryland’s accountability system does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. ³
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	Maryland does not calculate summative school ratings. ⁴

EXHIBIT A⁵

Braddock Middle

PARCC Assessment Performance Results Summary - 2015

		Performance Level										
		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4		Level 5		
		Did not yet meet expectations		Partially met expectations		Approached expectations		Met expectations		Exceeded expectations		
	TESTED	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
English/Language Arts 6	State	62055	7353	11.8	13429	21.6	18848	30.4	19893	32.1	2532	4.1
	County	607	96	15.8	144	23.7	206	33.9	155	25.5	*	≤5.0
	School	187	35	18.7	36	19.3	57	30.5	58	31.0	*	≤5.0
English/Language Arts 7	State	61200	10536	17.2	11686	19.1	15297	25.0	17718	29.0	5963	9.7
	County	607	101	16.6	148	24.4	178	29.3	158	26.0	*	≤5.0
	School	185	29	15.7	53	28.6	52	28.1	45	24.3	*	≤5.0
English/Language Arts 8	State	59335	10111	17.0	10969	18.5	14240	24.0	19839	33.4	4176	7.0
	County	615	112	18.2	158	25.7	159	25.9	174	28.3	*	≤5.0
	School	173	34	19.7	38	22.0	50	28.9	49	28.3	*	≤5.0
Mathematics 6	State	62194	8473	13.6	17837	28.7	17552	28.2	16345	26.3	1987	3.2
	County	606	91	15.0	144	23.8	167	27.6	191	31.5	*	≤5.0
	School	185	35	18.9	35	18.9	48	25.9	63	34.1	*	≤5.0
Mathematics 7	State	55010	7181	13.1	17630	32.0	18528	33.7	11036	20.1	635	1.2
	County	605	65	10.7	202	33.4	222	36.7	112	18.5	*	≤5.0
	School	184	14	7.6	59	32.1	72	39.1	37	20.1	*	≤5.0
Mathematics 8	State	41166	11971	29.1	11126	27.0	8530	20.7	8056	19.6	1483	3.6
	County	385	98	25.5	122	31.7	103	26.8	62	16.1	*	≤5.0
	School	84	24	28.6	30	35.7	26	31.0	*	≤5.0	*	≤5.0
Algebra I	State	61842	8047	13.0	17712	28.6	16757	27.1	18194	29.4	1132	1.8
	County	596	103	17.3	203	34.1	150	25.2	130	21.8	*	≤5.0
	School	88	*	≤5.0	11	12.5	27	30.7	44	50.0	5	5.7

ENDNOTES

1. “2015 Maryland Report Card,” accessed May 31, 2015, <http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/index.aspx?K=300130>.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. “Maryland School Report Card,” Maryland Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/printreports/2015/01/SchoolReports/English/010504_2015ReportCard.pdf.

MASSACHUSETTS



*Massachusetts's accountability system rewards schools that help students achieve at an advanced level.
Assigning even more weight to growth would further improve the system.*

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Massachusetts' accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Massachusetts' standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MASSACHUSETTS’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Massachusetts gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Massachusetts uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Massachusetts does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Massachusetts comes close. “Growth for all students” counts for 40 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

2015 Accountability Data - Michael E. Smith Middle School

Organization Information			
District:	South Hadley (02780000)	School type:	Middle School
School:	Michael E. Smith Middle School (02780305)	Grades served:	05,06,07,08
Region:	Pioneer Valley	Title I status:	Non-Title I School (NT)

Accountability Information		About the Data
Accountability and Assistance Level		
Level 2	Not meeting gap narrowing goals Low assessment participation (Less than 95%) Focus on Students w/disabilities -	
This school's overall performance relative to other schools in same school type (School percentiles: 1-99)		
All students:	<div><div></div></div>	47
	Lowest performing	Highest performing

This school's progress toward narrowing proficiency gaps (Cumulative Progress and Performance Index: 1-100)			
Student Group (Click group to view subgroup data)	On Target = 75 or higher - ■		View Detailed 2015 Data
	Less progress	More progress	
All students		66	Did Not Meet Target
High needs		58	Did Not Meet Target
Econ. Disadvantaged		-	-
ELL and Former ELL		-	-
Students w/disabilities		47	Did Not Meet Target
Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.		-	-
Asian		-	-
Afr. Amer./Black		-	-
Hispanic/Latino		76	Met Target
Multi-race, Non-Hisp./Lat.		-	-
Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.		-	-
White		74	Did Not Meet Target

EXHIBIT B⁴

Table 7: Sample PPI calculation

Indicators		2012	2013	2014	2015
English Language Arts	Narrowing proficiency gaps (CPI)	50	50	75	100
	Growth (SGP)	0	25	50	75
	Extra credit for decreasing % <i>Warning/Failing</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	25	0	0
	Extra credit for increasing % <i>Advanced</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	25	0
Mathematics	Narrowing proficiency gaps (CPI)	75	50	100	75
	Growth (SGP)	50	50	75	100
	Extra credit for decreasing % <i>Warning/Failing</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	0	25
	Extra credit for increasing % <i>Advanced</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	0	0
Science	Narrowing proficiency gaps (CPI)	50	50	50	100
	Extra credit for decreasing % <i>Warning/Failing</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	25	25
	Extra credit for increasing % <i>Advanced</i> ($\geq 10\%$)	0	0	0	25
High School	Annual dropout rate	75	100	75	100
	Cohort graduation rate	75	75	75	75
	Extra credit for reengaging dropouts (2 or more)	-	-	0	25
English Language Acquisition	Extra credit for high growth on ACCESS for ELLs assessment (Student Growth Percentile on ACCESS)	-	-	-	25
Points awarded for achievement, growth, and high school indicators		375	400	500	625
Points awarded for extra credit		0	25	50	125
Total points awarded		375	425	550	750
Number of achievement, growth, and high school indicators		7	7	7	7
Annual PPI		54	61	79	107
Cumulative PPI (2012*1 + 2013*2 + 2014*3 + 2015*4) ÷ 10		84			

ENDNOTES

1. “School Leader’s Guide to the 2015 Accountability Determinations,” Massachusetts Department of Education, page 7, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/ese/accountability/annual-reports/school-leaders-guide.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 5.
3. “2015 Accountability Data – Michael E. Smith Middle School,” Massachusetts Department of Education, accessed on May 31, 2016, <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/accountability/report/school.asp?linkid=31&orgcode=02780305&orgtypecode=6&>.
4. “School Leader’s Guide to the 2015 Accountability Determinations.”

MICHIGAN



Because it is based on proficiency rates and compliance, Michigan's accountability system gives schools no incentive to pay attention to their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Michigan's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Michigan's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MICHIGAN’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




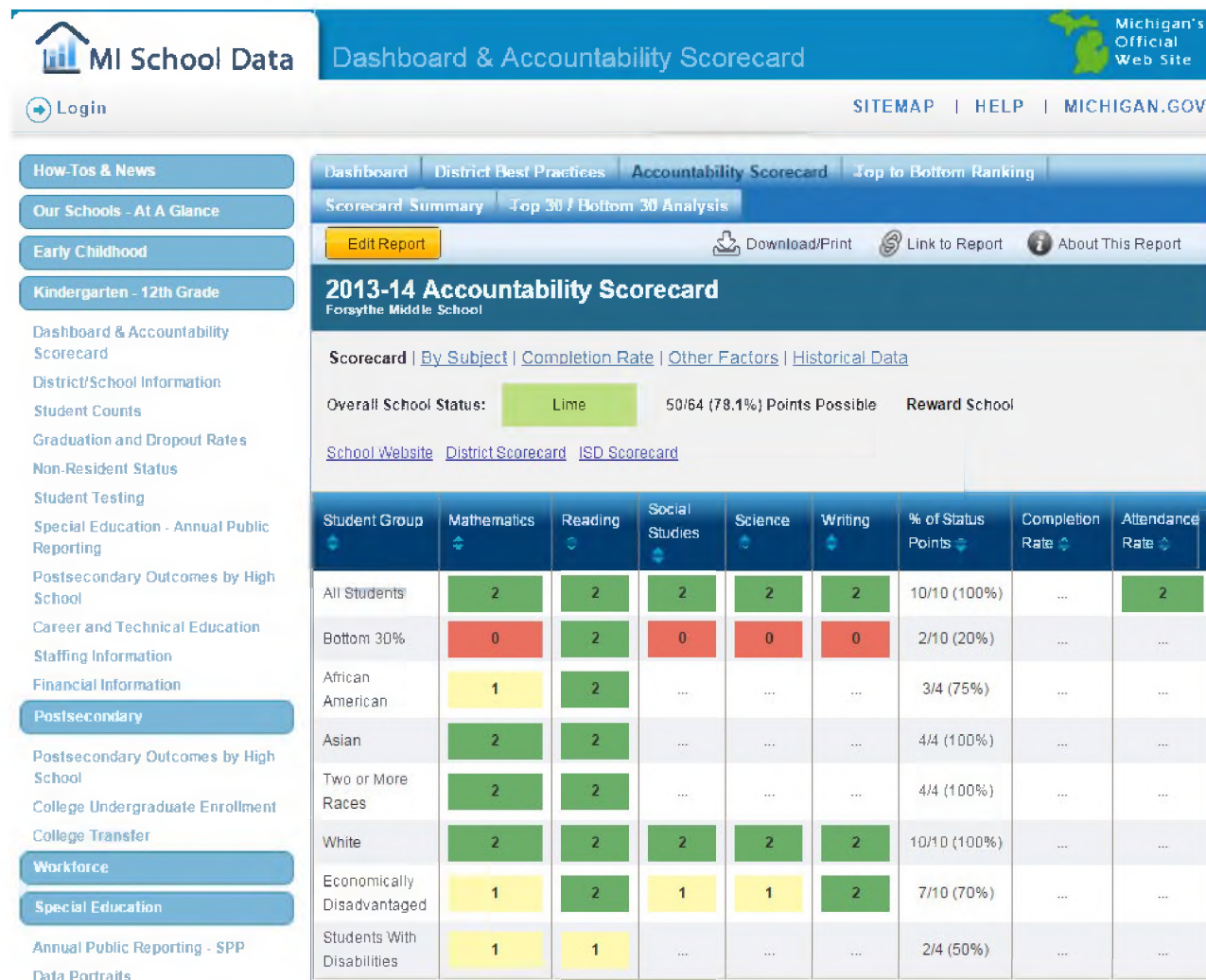
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Michigan does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Michigan is moving to a student growth percentile model but does not yet report data on growth. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Michigan does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” does not count toward a school’s summative rating. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

ENDNOTES

1. “2014 Michigan School Accountability Scorecards: Summary Characteristics,” Michigan Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Scorecard_Brief_465181_7.pdf.
2. “Student Growth Percentile,” Michigan Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SGP_Policy_Brief_475670_7.pdf.
3. “2014 Michigan School Accountability Scorecards: Summary Characteristics.”
4. “2013–14 Accountability Scorecard,” Michigan Department of Education, accessed May 31, 2016, <https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles/ReportCard/AccountabilityScorecard/AccountabilityScorecard.aspx>.

MINNESOTA



Minnesota includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Minnesota's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014–15 school year. We do not examine the quality of Minnesota's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MINNESOTA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Minnesota does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Minnesota uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Minnesota does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. ³
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 33 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A⁴

ENDNOTES

1. “Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) Flexibility Waiver Frequently Asked Questions,” Minnesota Department of Education, accessed June 28, 2016, <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/ESEAFlex/FedAccount/O41739>.
2. Ibid.
3. “Chaska Middle School East,” Minnesota Department of Education, accessed June 28, 2016, http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#MMR/orgId--10112061000_year--2015.
4. Ibid.

MISSISSIPPI



Mississippi includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Mississippi's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Mississippi's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MISSISSIPPI’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Mississippi does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Mississippi uses a categorical growth model. ² A categorical growth model compares the performance-level categories that student fall into from one year to the next.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Mississippi does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Growth counts for 57 percent of a school’s summative rating, but “growth for all students” counts for just 28.5 percent. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

Grenada School District (2220)

Grenada Middle School (2220012)

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires each state to use a unified accountability model. School, district, and state report cards that contain the following accountability information must be produced and made available publicly.

No Child
Left Behind
2013-2014
School
Report Card



Mississippi Statewide Accountability System

The Mississippi Statewide Accountability System (MSAS) is a single "A" through "F" school and district accountability system based on the requirements of Federal law under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request and Mississippi Code 37-17-6. The MSAS assigns performance classifications based on 1) student achievement, 2) student growth, and 3) graduation, if applicable. For the 2013-2014 school year, the U. S. Department of Education granted Mississippi a one-year waiver from school performance classifications due to the implementation of Mississippi's College and Career Readiness Standards. The waiver allowed districts and schools to retain the letter grade received in the 2012-2013 school year if the 2013-2014 grade was lower as a result of assessment results.

	Current Year	Prior Year
Official Grade:	B	B
Without Waiver Grade:	D	**
4-Year Graduation Rate:	**	**

Notes: Only districts and schools serving grade 1 or higher or higher are eligible to receive a performance classification. The Without Waiver Grade only applies the 2013-2014 school year. Possible Accountability Status: A, B, C, D, F. (N/A – The school did not receive a performance classification due to not having available data.)

ESEA Annual Measurable Objective (AMO)

A district or school is responsible for meeting annual measurable objectives (AMO) in three areas: Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and a third academic indicator referred to as the "Other Academic Indicator." The "Other Academic Indicator" for schools and districts without a grade 12 is the attendance rate. For schools and districts with a grade 12, the indicator is the graduation rate. If a district or school does not meet an AMO in any one of the three areas, the district or school is considered to have not met AMOs.

	Current Year	Prior Year
District AMO Status:	Not Met	Not Met
Reading/Language Arts Status:	Not Met	Not Met
Mathematics Status:	Not Met	Met
Other Academic Indicator Status:	Met	Met
Differentiated Accountability Label:	Not a Title I School	Not a Title I School

AMO Subgroup Results

Student Groups	Reading/ Language Arts	Mathematics	Other Academic Indicator	Graduation Rate		Attendance Rate
				Current Year	Prior Year	
All Students:	Not Met	Not Met	Met	**	**	95
Students with IEPs:	Not Met	Not Met	**	**	**	**
Limited English Proficient:	**	**	**	**	**	**
Economically Disadvantaged:	Not Met	Not Met	**	**	**	**
Asian:	**	**	**	**	**	**
Black:	Not Met	Not Met	**	**	**	**
Hispanic:	**	**	**	**	**	**
Native American:	**	**	**	**	**	**
White:	Not Met	Not Met	**	**	**	**

EXHIBIT B⁴**Exhibit A: Components of a School's or District's Accountability Grade, as of 2013-2014 Assessment Year**

Components	Without 12 th Grade	With 12 th Grade
	700 Possible Points	900 Possible Points
Reading Proficiency	100	100
Reading Growth-All Students	100	100
Reading Growth-Low 25% of Students	100	100
Math Proficiency	100	100
Math Growth-All Students	100	100
Math Growth-Low 25% of Students	100	100
Science Proficiency	100	50
U.S. History Proficiency		50
Graduation Rate-All Students*		200

*MDE uses a federally approved four-year graduation rate calculation (MISS. CODE ANN. Section 37-17-6 [1972]). See page 26 of the report.

NOTE: MDE does not currently use "college and career readiness" and "acceleration" to calculate a school's or district's grade. However, according to MDE, these components will be included beginning with school year 2015-2016 results. See pages 52-53 of the report for more information on these components.

SOURCE: MDE.

Exhibit B: MDE Cut-Points for Schools and Districts, as of 2013-2014 Assessment Year

Letter Grade	Cut-Point Range	
	Without 12 th grade	With 12 th grade
A	518 or higher	695 or higher
B	455-517	623-694
C	400-454	540-622
D	325-399	422-539
F	324 or lower	421 or lower

SOURCE: MDE.

ENDNOTES

1. "Report to the Mississippi Legislature: A Review of the Accountability Standards of the Mississippi Department of Education," Mississippi PEER Committee, pages 16–18, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.peer.state.ms.us/reports/rpt596.pdf>.
2. "Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards 2014," Mississippi Department of Education, page 28, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/accreditation-library/2014-mpsas-20140811.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.
3. "Grenada Middle School NCLB 2013–2014 Report Card," Mississippi Department of Education, page 15, accessed May 2, 2016, http://reports.mde.k12.ms.us/data/nclb_rc/2014/School/2220.pdf.
4. "Report to the Mississippi Legislature," page ix.

MISSOURI



By giving districts extra credit for getting students to an advanced level, the Missouri School Improvement Program encourages them to focus on their high achievers. Assigning more weight to growth would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether the Missouri School Improvement Program (the state's primary accountability system) prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating district performance during the 2014–15 school year.¹ We do not examine the quality of Missouri's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MISSOURI’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Missouri gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ²
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Missouri uses a multivariate value-added model. ³ A multivariate value-added model estimates a school’s contribution to students’ academic growth by comparing their actual growth to their expected growth based on prior achievement and other factors.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Missouri does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately.
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for at most 25 percent of a school’s summative rating. ⁴ (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A⁵**MSIP 5 Annual Performance Report (APR) Scoring Guide**

Missouri's Top 10 by 20 plan holds as a primary goal that all students will graduate high school college- and career-ready. To measure progress toward this goal and to distinguish among school and district performance, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education computes an Annual Performance Report (APR) score for each Local Education Agency (LEA) and school. This overall score is comprised of scores for each of the MSIP 5 Performance Standards (1) **Academic Achievement**, (2) **Subgroup Achievement**, (3) **High School Readiness** (K-8 districts) or **College and Career Readiness** (K-12 districts), (4) **Attendance Rate**, and (5) **Graduation Rate** (K-12 districts). Three (3) distinct metrics focusing on status, progress, and growth (where applicable) are used to calculate a comprehensive score used to determine the accreditation level of a school district.

Performance Standard 1 Academic Achievement	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
Points Possible	16	16	16	8
Performance Standard 2 Subgroup Achievement	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
Points Possible	4	4	4	2
Performance Standard 3 (K-12 Districts) College & Career Readiness	Indicators*1-3	Indicator*4	Indicators*5-6	
Points Possible	10	10	10	
Performance Standard 3 (K-8 Districts) High School Readiness				
Points Possible	10			
Performance Standard 4 Attendance				
Points Possible	10			
Performance Standard 5 Graduation				
Points Possible	30			

ENDNOTES

1. Despite its name, the Missouri School Improvement Program rates the performance of districts (not schools). We chose to rate this system rather than the state's school rating system based on the feedback we received from local reviewers.
2. "Comprehensive Guide to the Missouri School Improvement System," Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, page 18, accessed July 11, 2016, http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/MSIP_5_2015_Comprehensive_Guide.pdf.
3. Ibid, 14-15.
4. Ibid, 23-24.
5. Ibid, 9.

MONTANA



With no accountability system to speak of, Montana does nothing to encourage schools to focus on high-achieving students—or any other group.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Montana's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2012-2013 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Montana's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES MONTANA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

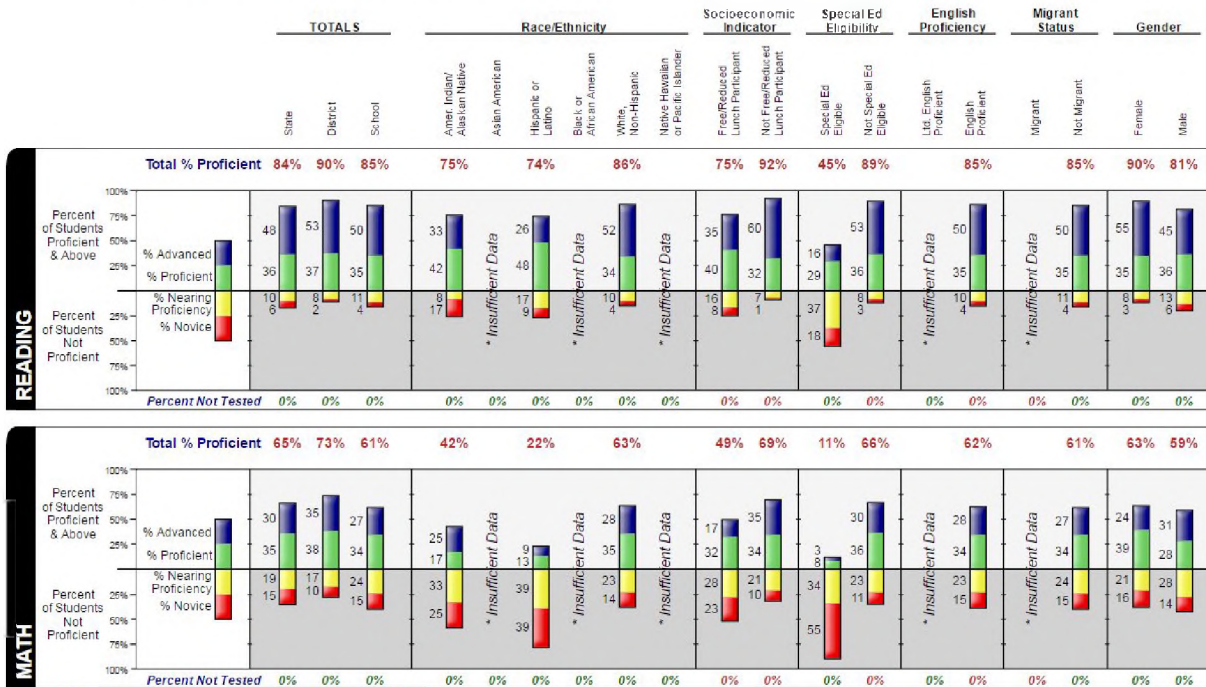
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Montana does not give additional credit for students achieving at an advanced level, though it does report these data. ¹ (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Montana does not have a growth model at this time. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Montana does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	Montana does not have a system for calculating summative school ratings. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

Belgrade Middle School

2012-2013 School Year

Criterion-Referenced Test Score Summaries - All Grades Tested



* Note: Statistics not reported for student groups of fewer than 10 students.
Percentages within student groups may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

ENDNOTES

1. “2012–2013 AYP Manual,” Montana Office of Public Instruction, page 7, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://opi.mt.gov/PDF/AYP/2013/2013-AYP-Manual.pdf>.
2. “IT Strategic Plan 2014,” Montana Office of Public Instruction, page 5, accessed May 3, 2016, <https://sitsd.mt.gov/Portals/77/docs/IT%20Plans/Agencies%20IT%20Plans/2014%20Plans/Office%20Public%20Instruct%20IT%20Plan%201014.pdf>.
3. “State School Accountability/Grading System,” National Conference of State Legislatures, page 2, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/SchoolAccountabilityJan13.pdf>.
4. “2012–2013 SY Belgrade Middle School Academic Indicator by Grade & Subject Report,” Montana Office of Public Instruction, accessed May 3, 2016, <http://www.opi.mt.gov/Reports&Data/nclb-reports.php>.

NEBRASKA



TWO STARS OUT OF FOUR

Because it gauges achievement by averaging raw test scores instead of calculating proficiency rates, Nebraska's accountability system encourages schools to pay attention to all of their students. Weighting growth more heavily and reporting results for high-achieving students separately would improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Nebraska's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Nebraska's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NEBRASKA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?








INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Nebraska rates schools’ “academic achievement” by averaging students’ raw test scores, thereby giving additional credit for students who achieve at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Nebraska uses a gain score growth model. ² A gain score model measures the absolute improvement in students’ achievement (in points) using a common scale.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Nebraska does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Summative school ratings are based primarily on achievement, though a school’s rating may be adjusted upwards if enough students show significant improvement. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

Student Performance: Mathematics

Student Groups	2013-2014		2014-2015		
	Performance	Participation	Performance		Participation
All students	NOT MET	MET	MET		MET 100.0%
Hispanic	MET	MET	MET		MET 100.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	*	*	*		*
Asian	*	*	*		*
Black or African American	~	~	~		~
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*	*	*		*
White	NOT MET	MET	MET		MET 100.0%
Two or More Races	NOT MET	MET	MET		MET 100.0%
Students eligible for free and reduced lunch	MET	MET	NOT MET		MET 100.0%
Special Education Students	NOT MET	MET	MET		MET 100.0%
English Language Learners	~	~	~		~

Two consecutive years of not meeting the state goals in the same subject area considering all the eligible groups in all grade levels in the district identifies it as being in need of improvement.

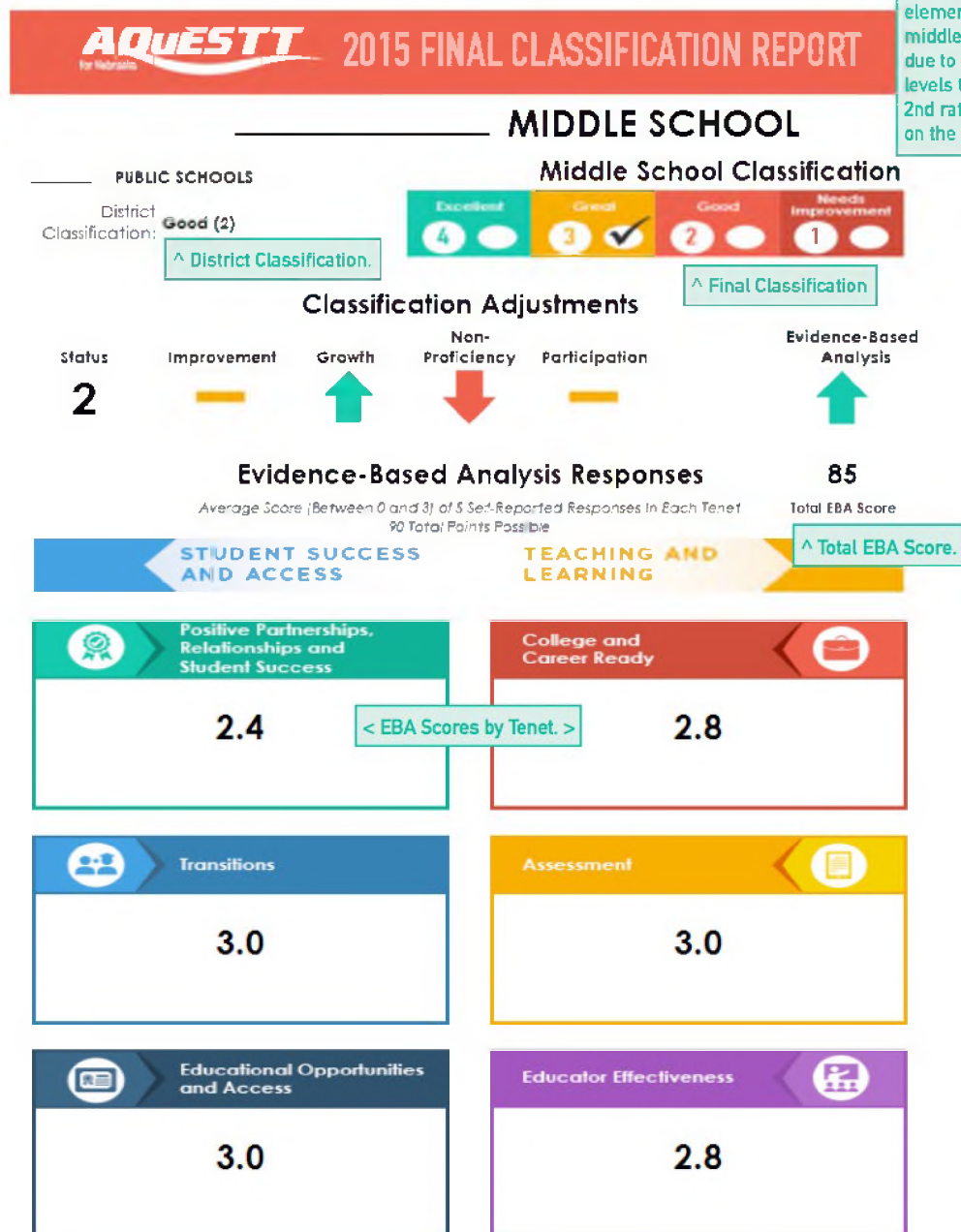
NOTE: Click on the search icon for additional information.

Other Federal Accountability (AYP) Factors: Writing

Student Groups	2013-2014 Performance	2014-2015 Performance
All students		MET
Hispanic		~
American Indian/Alaska Native		*
Asian		*
Black or African American		*
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		*
White		MET
Two or More Races		~
Students eligible for free and reduced lunch		MET
Special Education Students		MET
English Language Learners		*

EXHIBIT B⁴

HOW TO READ THE 2015 AQuESTT FINAL CLASSIFICATION REPORT



ENDNOTES

1. "AQuESTT Classification System," Nebraska Department of Education, pages 4–5, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://drs.education.ne.gov/guidedinquiry/AQuESTT/AQuESTT%20Final%20Classification%20Business%20Rules.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 5-7.
3. "Pound Middle School: 2014–2015 State of the Schools Report," Nebraska Department of Education, accessed May 2, 2016, http://reportcard.education.ne.gov/pg_FederalAccount_AYP.aspx?AgencyID=55-0001-017&AgencyName=POUND+MIDDLE+SCHOOL.
4. "How to Read the AQuESTT Final Classification Reports," AQuESST for Nebraska, page 1, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://aquestt.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/PublicInstructionsFINAL.pdf>.

NEVADA



Unlike most states, Nevada tracks the academic growth of high-achieving students. A rating system that assigned more weight to growth would give schools a stronger incentive to focus on these students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Nevada's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Nevada's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NEVADA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Nevada does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Nevada uses a student growth percentile model. ¹ A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Nevada reports academic growth for students in its gifted and talented program separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Nevada comes close. “Growth for all students” counts for 40 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A²

School Overview Report

Carson Middle School (13301.2)

School Year: 2013-14

**4 Star School:**

A 4-Star School is among the higher performing schools in Nevada in student proficiency and/or student growth on the State assessments. The school is acknowledged for its achievement with public recognition and has some autonomy and/or flexibility in school planning and decision-making.

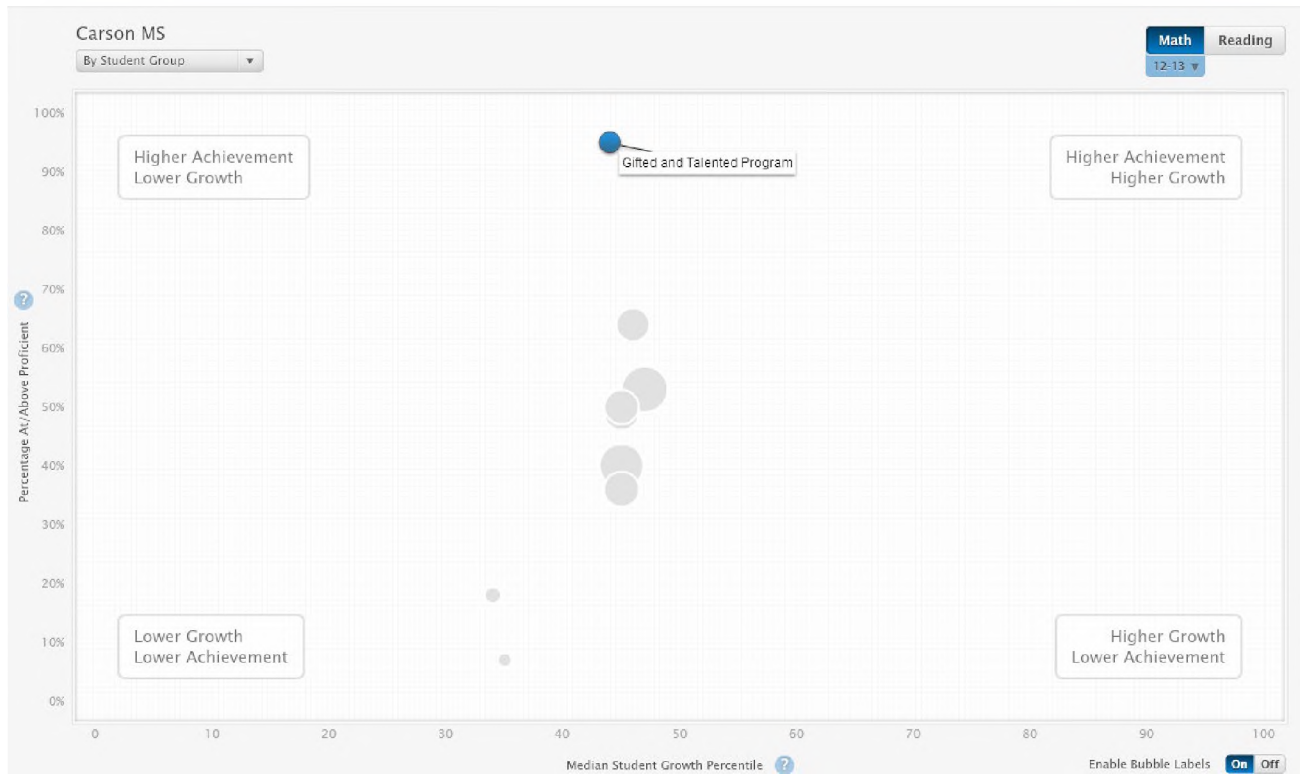
This school participated in the [Smarter Balanced Field Test](#)

Performance Indicators	Points Earned	Points Eligible	Percentage of Points Earned
Growth Measure of Achievement	30.0	40	75.0%
Status Measure of Achievement	21.0	30	70.0%
Reductions in Achievement Gaps	14.0	20	70.0%
Other Indicator	6.0	10	60.0%
Total Index Score	[Points Earned(71.00)/Points Eligible(100)] X 100 = 71.00		
Reading/ELA Test Participation	99.8%		Math Test Participation 99.6%

Whole School Demographics (N = 1063)									
IEP	ELL	FRL	Am Indian/ AK Native	Asian	Black/ Afr American	Hispanic/ Latino	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	White/ Caucasian
13.8%	9.7%	49.4%	1.7%	2.2%	0.7%	38.5%	0.1%	3.8%	53.2%

What do the performance indicators mean?

Growth Measure of Achievement	Status Measures of Achievement	
Student Growth is a measure of performance on the State assessments over time. Students who perform similarly on the first administration of the test are compared to each other after the second. Each student's relative performance to each other is measured as a percentile. This value is called the Student Growth Percentile or SGP. Separate SGP determinations are made for Reading/ELA and Math.	Status is a measure of student performance based on a single administration of the State assessment. Cut scores are set that determine the achievement level needed to be proficient on the assessments. Status Measures of Achievement are determined by calculating the percent of students in the school who met or exceeded standards on the State assessments. School-level calculations are made for Reading/ELA and Math.	
Reductions in Achievement Gaps	Other Indicator	
Student achievement targets to meet proficiency on the State assessments within three years are determined for each elementary and middle school student. These targets are called Adequate Growth Percentiles or AGP. Reduction in Achievement Gap is based on the percent of IEP, ELL, or FRL students who meet their AGP targets. Separate calculations are made for Reading/ELA and Math. Subgroups are identified as students who are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), are English Language Learners (ELL) or receive Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL).	Currently, the Other Indicator is a measure of the student average daily attendance or ADA for a school.	
Test Participation	Star Rating	Index Score
Schools do not earn additional framework points for Test Participation, but in order for a school to be classified as a 2, 3, 4 or 5 star school, the school must meet the 95% participation rate threshold or have an average of 95% participation or better from the two or three most recent years of testing.	★★★★★	at or above 77
	★★★★☆	at or above 68 and below 77
	★★★☆☆	at or above 50 and below 68
	★★☆☆☆	at or above 32 and below 50
	★☆☆☆☆	below 32

EXHIBIT B³

ENDNOTES

1. "Nevada School Performance Framework-Elementary/Middle School," Nevada Department of Education, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://nspf.doe.nv.gov/Home/AboutEle>.
2. "School Overview Report-Carson Middle School," Nevada Department of Education, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://nspf.doe.nv.gov/School/Overview/13/13301.2?years=2014>.
3. "Nevada Growth Model-Carson MS," Nevada Department of Education, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://ngma.doe.nv.gov/v/app/public/index.htm#/district-13/schools>.

NEW HAMPSHIRE



New Hampshire's accountability system emphasizes growth, but by prioritizing progress for traditionally low-performing subgroups, it may be giving an incentive to ignore their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether New Hampshire's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of New Hampshire's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NEW HAMPSHIRE’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		New Hampshire does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		New Hampshire uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		New Hampshire does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Growth counts for 60 percent of a school’s summative rating, but “growth for all students” counts for just 12 percent. ³ (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A⁴

Select School Year: 2013 Select a District: 141 - Dover View Report

Enter a School: 20435 - Dover Middle School

1 of 1 Find | Next

2013 - 2014
NEW HAMPSHIRE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT
DOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL (20435) IN DOVER

SCHOOL PROFILE: Enrollment: 1089 Grades : 5 to 8 ELL (English Learners): 4 % SWD (Students with Disabilities): 0 % Low SES: 32 %

READING:			N	Med. Target SGP	Med. Actual SGP	Met Target ?	% Met AMAO 1 Target	Points Earned	TOTAL
Whole School (all SGP groups)		773	11	59	Y			4	
EL - AMAO1		4							
EL - SGP		20	39	77	Y			4	
SWD - SGP		105	65	44	N			2	
Low SES - SGP		165	12	58	Y			4	
All Others - SGP		483	8	63	Y			4	
READING AVERAGE POINTS								3.6	
WEIGHTING = TIMES 3									10.8
MATHEMATICS:			N	Med. Target SGP	Med. Actual SGP	Met Target?		Points Earned	TOTAL
Whole School (all SGP groups)		773	26	53		Y		3	
EL - SGP		20	58	81		Y		4	
SWD - SGP		105	93	40		N		2	
Low SES - SGP		165	35	50		Y		3	
All Others - SGP		483	13	55		Y		3	
MATHEMATICS AVERAGE POINTS								3.0	
WEIGHTING = TIMES 3									9.0
SCIENCE:			N	Index Score		Points Earned		TOTAL	
Whole School (all Index groups)		243	81		3				
EL - Index		2							
SWD - Index		33	62		1				
Low SES - Index		53	75		2				
All Others - Index		155	87		3				
SCIENCE AVERAGE POINTS								2.3	
WEIGHTING = TIMES 1									2.3

PARTICIPATION (IN NECAP AND ACCESS FOR ELLS)				
	N	Participation Rate	Points Earned	TOTAL
Math Whole School	1,110	100	4	
Math ELLs	41	100	4	
Math SWD	145	100	4	
Math Low SES	234	100	4	
Math All others	689	100	4	
Reading Whole School	1,110	100	4	
Reading ELLs	41	100	4	
Reading SWD	145	100	4	
Reading Low SES	234	100	4	
Reading All Others	689	100	4	
Reading - ACCESS	25	100	4	
PARTICIPATION AVERAGE POINTS			4.0	
WEIGHTING = TIMES 1				4.0

EXCESSIVE ABSENCE: Percent of students absent more than 10% of enrolled time				
	N	Excessive Absence Rate	Points Earned	TOTAL
Whole School	1,089	9	3	
ELLs	45	2	4	
SWD	160	21	1	
Low SES	235	16	2	
All Others	659	4	4	
EXCESSIVE ABSENCE AVERAGE POINTS			2.8	
WEIGHTING = TIMES 1				2.8

DOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TOTAL				32.1
Score for Adequacy Decision:				3.2

ENDNOTES

1. “Performance Indicators Report – Elementary/Middle Schools,” New Hampshire Department of Education, accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/school_improve/documents/2011-2012-rubric-descrip-elem-ms.pdf.
2. “Implementation of Student Growth Model,” New Hampshire Department of Education, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://education.nh.gov/growth/documents/gaa-overview.pdf>.
3. “2014 Adequacy Report,” New Hampshire Department of Education, pages 5–8, accessed May 5, 2016, http://education.nh.gov/instruction/school_improve/documents/adequacy-report14.pdf.
4. “2013–2014 NH Performance Indicator Report Dover Middle School,” New Hampshire Department of Education, accessed May 5, 2016, <https://my.doe.nh.gov/profiles/accountability/performanceindicatorreport.aspx?year=2014&d=709&s=28620&rpt=PerformanceElemAndMiddle>.

NEW JERSEY



New Jersey includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether New Jersey's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of New Jersey's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NEW JERSEY’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		New Jersey does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level, though it does report these data. ¹ (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		New Jersey uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		New Jersey does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	New Jersey does not calculate summative school ratings. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
ATLANTIC
ABSECON CITY

State of New Jersey
2014-15

GRADE SPAN 05-08

01-0010-050
EMMA C ATTALES
800 IRELAN AVENUE
ABSECON, NJ 08201

PARCC ELA Performance Distribution - Grade - 05

This table presents the grade level outcomes, as measured by PARCC, in all five performance levels for all subgroups. PARCC consists of five performance levels: Level 1 - Did not yet meet grade-level expectations, Level 2 - Partially met expectations, Level 3 - Approached expectations, Level 4 - Met expectations, and Level 5 - Exceeded expectations.

Subgroup	Valid Scores	Mean Scale Score	State Mean Scale Score	% Level_1	% Level_2	% Level_3	% Level_4	% Level_5	% Met/Exceeded Expectation	State % Met/Exceeded Expectation
Schoolwide	92	750	751	5%	14%	24%	53%	3%	57%	53%
White	56	759	757	2%	9%	21%	63%	5%	68%	62%
African American	-	-	734	-	-	-	-	-	-	31%
Hispanic	16	740	737	13%	13%	38%	38%	0%	38%	35%
American Indian	-	-	746	-	-	-	-	-	-	45%
Asian	-	-	771	-	-	-	-	-	-	77%
Two or More Races	-	-	758	-	-	-	-	-	-	61%
Students with Disability	-	-	723	-	-	-	-	-	-	21%
English Language Learners	-	-	717	-	-	-	-	-	-	15%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	35	738	734	9%	20%	34%	37%	0%	37%	31%

ENDNOTES

1. NJ School Performance Reports – Interpretive Guide,” page 6, accessed August 10, 2016, <http://www.nj.gov/education/pr/1415/NJSchoolPerformanceInterpretiveGuide.pdf>
2. Ibid, 13.
3. Ibid, 3.
4. “2014–2015 School Performance Report-Emma C. Attales Middle School,” New Jersey Department of Education, page 6, accessed August 10, 2016, <http://www.nj.gov/education/pr/1415/01/010010050.pdf>.

NEW MEXICO



New Mexico's accountability system assigns significant weight to growth, but because it prioritizes progress for low-achieving students, it gives schools an incentive to ignore their high achievers.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether New Mexico's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of New Mexico's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NEW MEXICO’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		New Mexico does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		New Mexico uses a multivariate value-added model. ² A multivariate value-added model estimates a school’s contribution to students’ academic growth by comparing their actual growth to their expected growth based on prior achievement and other factors.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		New Mexico does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. ³
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		New Mexico’s growth measures count for 50 percent of a school’s summative grade. However, the design of these measures favors low-performing students. (See Exhibit B.)

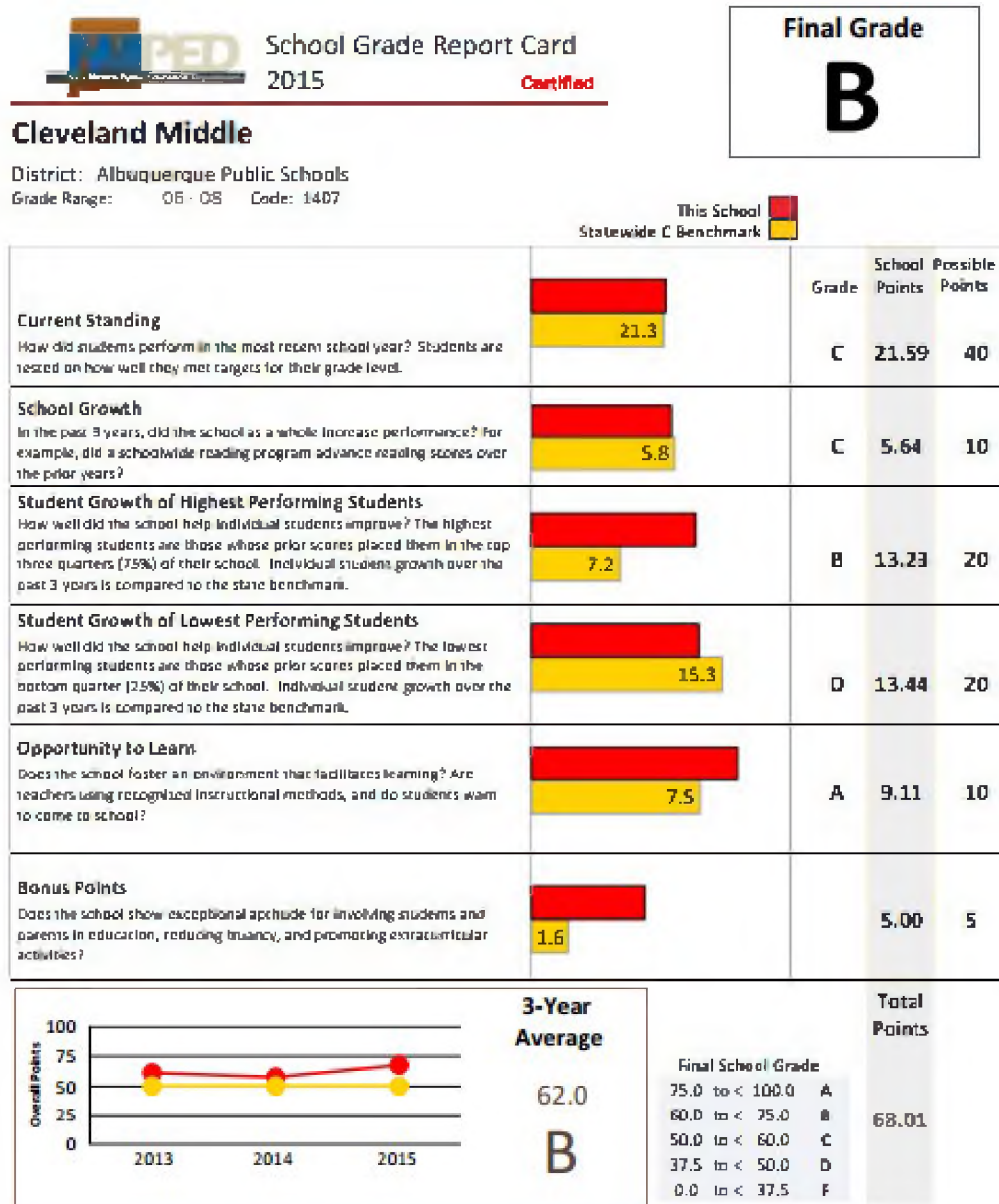
EXHIBIT A⁴

EXHIBIT B⁵

Overall Model and Points - Elementary and Middle Schools			Points
Current Standing How did students perform in the most recent school year? Students are tested on how well they met targets for their grade level (Proficient).	Percent Proficient	25	40
	Value-added conditioning of proficiencies, accounting for school characteristics for the past 3 years.	15	
School Growth In the past 3 years did the school increase grade level performance? For example, did this year's 3 rd graders improve over last year's 3 rd graders?	Value-added conditioning of performance, taking into account school characteristics for the past 3 years.	10	10
Growth of Higher Performing Students (Q3) How well did the school help individual students improve? The highest performing students are those whose prior scores placed them in the top three quarters (75%) of their school.	Individual <i>Student Growth</i> over the past 3 years is compared to the average for the state.	20	20
Growth of Lowest Performing Students (Q1) How well did the school help individual students improve? The lowest performing students are those whose prior scores placed them in the bottom quarter (25%) of their school.	Individual <i>Student Growth</i> over the past 3 years is compared to average for the state.	20	20
Opportunity to Learn Does the school foster an environment that facilitates learning? Are teachers using recognized instructional methods, and do students want to come to school?	Attendance for all students	5	10
	Classroom survey	5	
Total			100
Student and Parent Engagement Does the school show exceptional aptitude for involving students and parents in education, reducing truancy, and promoting extracurricular activities?	Bonus Points		+5

ENDNOTES

1. "School Grading Technical Guide," New Mexico Public Education Department, page 14, accessed May 5, 2016, http://aae.ped.state.nm.us/docs/Technical_Guide_2015_V2.O.pdf.
2. Ibid, 18-20.
3. Technically, the state does report results for "highest-achieving students." However, since this group includes the highest achieving 75 percent of students, it does not satisfy our definition of "high-achieving."
4. "2015 School Grade Report Card-Cleveland Middle School," New Mexico Public Education Department, page 1, accessed May 5, 2016, http://webapp2.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolData/docs/1415/SchoolGrading/001_407_ALBUQUERQUE_PUBLIC_SCHOOLS_CLEVELAND_MIDDLE__SchoolGrading_2015.pdf.
5. "School Grading Technical Guide," 34.

NEW YORK



With an accountability system based on proficiency rates, New York gives schools an incentive to ignore their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether New York's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015-2016 school year. We do not examine the quality of New York's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NEW YORK’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		New York gives additional credit for students achieving at Level 3 or higher. (See Exhibit A.) However, this standard does not satisfy our definition of “high-achieving.”
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		New York uses a student growth percentile model. ¹ However, because it does not rate (or report) most schools’ growth we do not give credit for this indicator.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		New York does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately.
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	New York does not calculate summative ratings for most schools, though it does identify “priority” and “focus” schools. ²

EXHIBIT A³

Performance Index (PI)

- For each school and district, NYSED calculates a Performance Index value for all the accountable subgroups (30 or more tested students) for all the accountability measures at the elementary/middle and secondary levels.
- A Performance Index is a value from 0 to 200 that is assigned to an accountability group, indicating how that group performed on a required State assessment (or approved alternative) in English language arts, mathematics, or science.
- $PI = \%Level\ 2 + \%Level\ 3 + \%Level\ 4 + \%Level\ 3 + \%Level\ 4$



Performance Index: Example

Grade	Student Count	Count of students performing at level:			
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
5	35	12	7	10	6
6	42	4	14	14	10
7	30	6	10	10	4
Total	107	22	31	34	20

$$PI = [(31+34+20+34+20) \div 107] \times 100 = 130$$

For Common Core Regents Exams, the five performance levels are converted into four accountability levels and the PI is determined.



ENDNOTES

1. “2014–15 Technical Report for Growth Measures,” New York State Education Department, accessed July 27, 2016, <https://www.engageny.org/file/147081/download/2014-15-technical-report-for-growth-measures.pdf?token=4Kdm3PMf>.
2. “Focus Districts: Identification, Requirements, and Interventions,” New York State Education Department, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/PPTFocusDistrictWebinarO20116.pptx>.
3. Ibid.

NORTH CAROLINA



By establishing growth targets for “academically or intellectually gifted” students, North Carolina provides schools with a clear incentive to focus on their progress. Yet because growth accounts for just a small fraction of schools’ summative grades, this incentive is not nearly as strong as it should be.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools’ impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB’s requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether North Carolina's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of North Carolina's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NORTH CAROLINA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





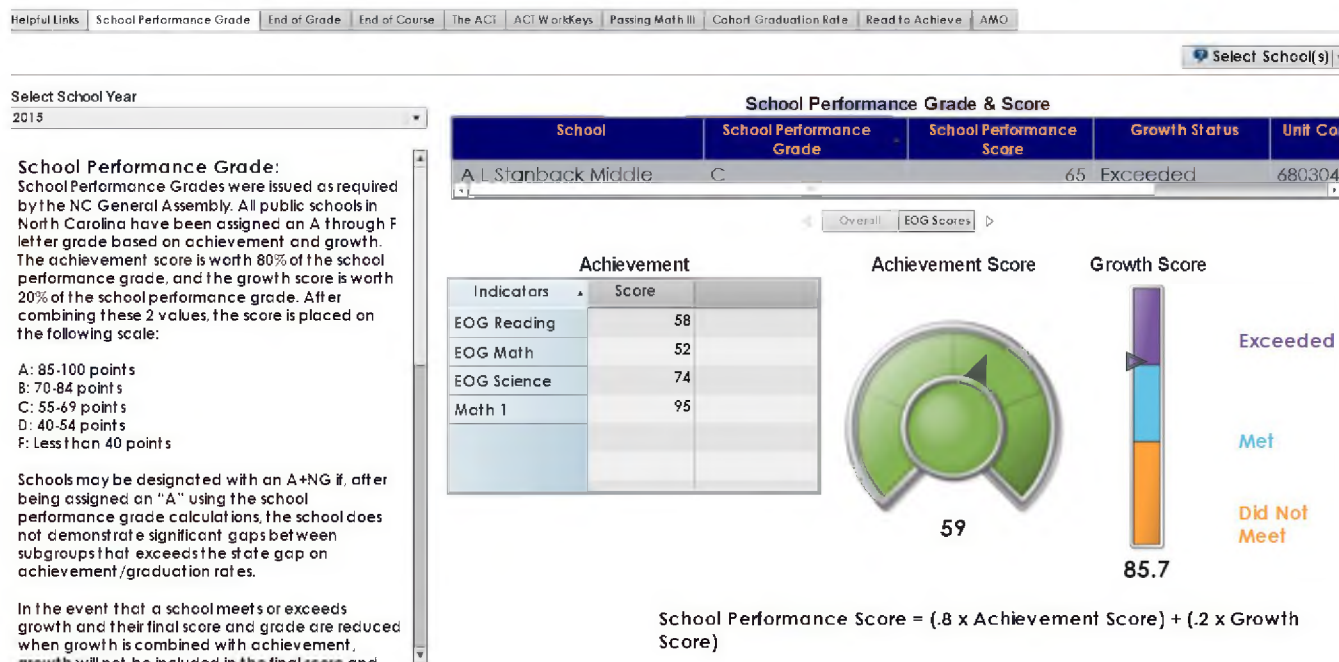
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		North Carolina does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		North Carolina uses a multivariate value-added model. ² A multivariate value-added model estimates a school’s contribution to students’ academic growth by comparing their actual growth to their expected growth based on prior achievement and other factors.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		North Carolina establishes growth targets for “academically or intellectually gifted” students and reports their achievement separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Growth counts for just 20 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A³**End-of-Grade Assessments:**

Students in grades 3-8 must complete state End-of-Grade (EOG) assessments in English language arts/reading and mathematics and students in grades 5 and 8 must complete state EOG assessments in science at the conclusion of each school year.

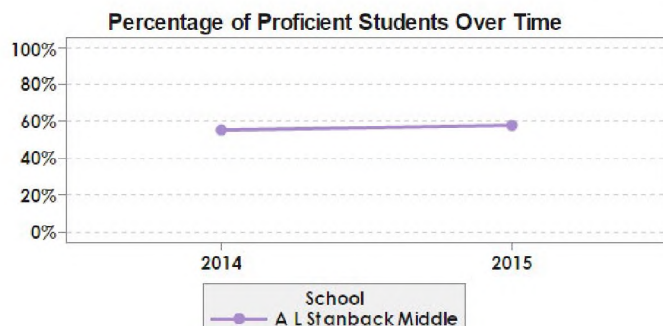
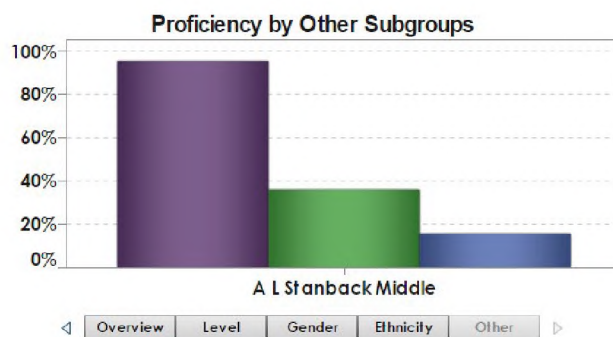
Student performance on the EOG assessments is reported in levels

Select Subject
☒ All EOGs
☐ EOG Math
☐ EOG Reading
☐ EOG Science

Select Grade
☒ All ...
☐ 06
☐ 07
☐ 08

Select Performance Level
☐ College and C...
☒ Grade Level Pr...

Select School Year
 2015
 and 5 are considered college and career ready.



Proficiency by Subgroup

Subgroups ▲	Academically or Intellectually Gifted			Economically Disadvantaged
School ▲	School Proficiency	District Proficiency	State Proficiency	School Proficiency
A L Stanback Middle	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%

◀

Level

Subgroup

▶

ENDNOTES

1. “Accountability Brief,” North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, pages 1–2, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/schlprfrmbrf15.pdf>.
2. Ibid.
3. “A.L. Stanback Middle School Performance Grade and Score,” North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, accessed May 2, 2016, https://ncreportcards.ondemand.sas.com/SASVisualAnalyticsViewer/VisualAnalyticsViewer_guest.jsp?reportPath=/ReportCard/NC_SRC&reportName=NC+Report+Cards.

NORTH DAKOTA



Because its accountability system is based on proficiency rates, North Dakota gives schools a strong incentive to ignore their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether North Dakota's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015-2016 school year. We do not examine the quality of North Dakota's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES NORTH DAKOTA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		North Dakota does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		North Dakota does not use a growth model at this time. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		North Dakota does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	North Dakota does not have a system for calculating summative school ratings.

EXHIBIT A³

Report: North Dakota Assessment - School, Distr 0 **2014-15**
School: Turtle Mountain Community Middle Scho **40-007-8566-0608** **Belcourt 7 (0K-12)**
Adequate Yearly Progress **Section C**

	School Year 2013-2014			School Year 2014-2015		
	State	District	School	State	District	School
Mathematics						
Proficiency Goal	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
Actual Percent Proficient:	76.7%	62.0%	57.2%			
Participation Goal	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Actual Percent Participation:	98.5%	99.2%	99.0%	98.6%	99.0%	99.1%
Reading						
Proficiency Goal	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
Actual Percent Proficient:	74.4%	52.9%	53.2%			
Participation Goal	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%
Actual Percent Participation:	98.4%	99.3%	99.4%	98.5%	99.0%	99.2%
Attendance						
Secondary Goal	93.0%	93.0%	93.0%	93.0%	93.0%	93.0%
Actual Rate:	>95.0%	94.5%	94.5%	>95.0%	95.0%	>95.0%
Graduation						
Secondary Goal						
Actual Rate:						
Did entity make AYP?	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES

Reasons for School not making AYP:	School Year 2013-2014					School Year 2014-2015				
	Math Partic.	Math Prof.	Reading Partic.	Reading Prof.	Grad	Math Partic.	Math Prof.	Reading Partic.	Reading Prof.	Grad
All students				*						
White	i	i	i	i						
American Indian				*						
Black										
Hispanic										
Asian										
Students w/Limited English Prof. (LEP)		*		*		i		i		
Low Income				*						
Students w/disabilities (IEP)		*		*						

Secondary Indicators:	School Year 2013-2014	School Year 2014-2015
Graduation Rate		
Attendance Rate		

* Indicates an area for which AYP was not met
+ indicates met AYP based on the 4-, 5-, or 6-year graduation improvement target
DK, i = Insufficient data to determine AYP status
Partic. = Participation Rate
Prof. = Proficiency Rate
Adequate Yearly Progress was not determined based on achievement during school year 2014-15.

ENDNOTES

1. "A Guide to the 2014–15 Annual Adequate Yearly Progress Report: August 2015," North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, pages 14–16, accessed June 14, 2016, <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/91/Ayp1415Guide.pdf>.
2. Ibid.
3. "Annual Adequate Yearly Progress Report, School Year 2014–15, Turtle Mountain Community Middle School," North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, page 5, accessed August 2, 2016, <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/reports/profile/1415/ProfilePlant/4000785660608.pdf>.

OHIO



Ohio's accountability system is the best in the country at encouraging schools to pay attention to their high achievers. Other states should take heed.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Ohio's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014–15 school year. We do not examine the quality of Ohio's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES OHIO’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Ohio gives additional credit for students achieving at “accelerated,” “advanced,” and “advanced plus” levels. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Ohio uses a multivariate value-added model. ¹ A multivariate value-added model estimates a school’s contribution to students’ academic growth by comparing their actual growth to their expected growth based on prior achievement and other factors.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Ohio includes “gifted students” as a subgroup and reports their results separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	Ohio will not calculate summative school ratings until 2018. ²

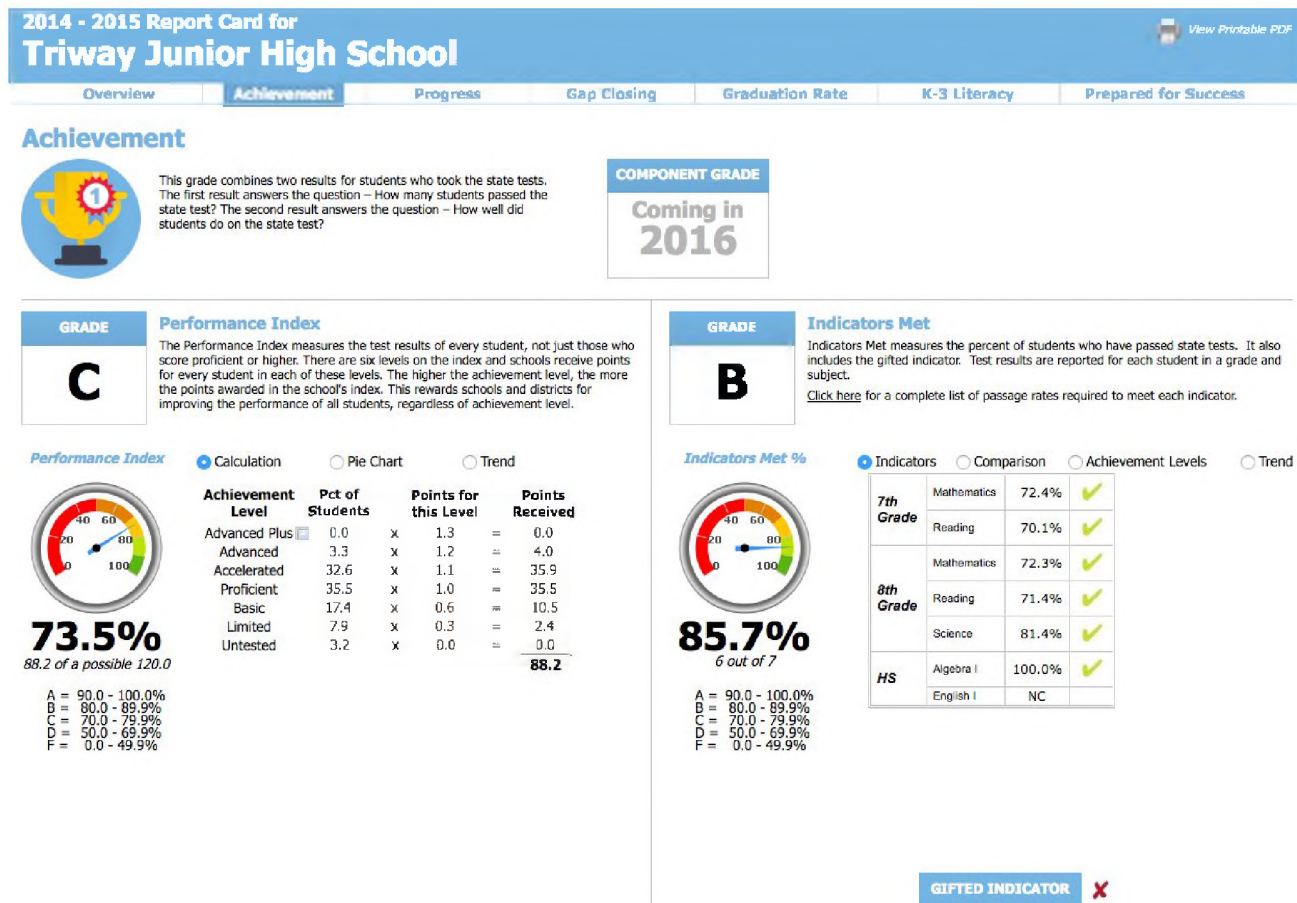
EXHIBIT A³

EXHIBIT B⁴2014 - 2015 Report Card for
Triway Junior High School

View Printable PDF

Overview

Achievement

Progress

Gap Closing

Graduation Rate

K-3 Literacy

Prepared for Success

Gifted Students



The Gifted Students data and Indicator highlight the opportunities for and performance of gifted students. The dashboard answers several questions: How many students are identified as gifted and in what categories? How many of those students are receiving gifted services? How well are those gifted students performing? The Gifted Indicator measures whether opportunity and performance expectations are being met for gifted students.

INDICATOR

Not Met

ALL ACHIEVEMENT

Gifted Indicator

Overview Performance Index Gifted Inputs

The Gifted Indicator is derived from three components: Gifted Value Added grade, the Performance Index for gifted students, and a Gifted Inputs score.

Gifted Value Added

Value Added Grade: D
Value Added Met? Not Met

Schools must earn a Gifted Value Added grade of C or better to meet the Gifted Value Added component.

Gifted Performance Index

Performance Index: 110.189
Performance Index Met? Not Met

Schools with at least 10 unique students in the Gifted Performance Index calculation must score 115.0 or better to meet the Gifted Performance Index component.

Gifted Inputs

Total Points: 34.0
Gifted Inputs Met? Not Met

Points are earned based on identification and services provided to gifted students. Schools must earn 40 or more points out of a possible 100 to meet the Gifted Inputs component.

Gifted Indicator Final Result

INDICATOR

Not Met

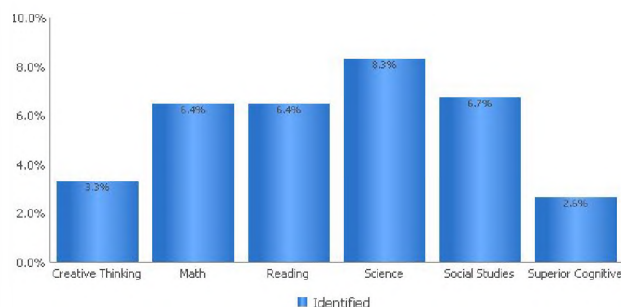
The Gifted Indicator is Met if none of the three components are Not Met. Gifted Inputs alone cannot determine the Gifted Indicator, however; if both the Value Added and Performance Index components are NC, then the Gifted Indicator is also NC.

[Click here](#) for a complete description of how the Gifted Indicator is determined.

Additional Information on Identification and Services

All Grades

This chart shows the percentage of all enrolled students that are identified as gifted and that are receiving gifted services.



Identified

Note: Students may be identified in more than one category

ENDNOTES

1. “Common Questions about Ohio’s Value-Added Student Growth Measure,” Ohio Department of Education, page 1, accessed May 9, 2016, <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Accountability-Resources/Value-Added-Technical-Reports-1/Questions-Value-Added-Student-Growth.pdf.aspx>.
2. “Guide to 2015 Ohio School Report Cards,” Ohio Department of Education, page 4, accessed May 9, 2016, <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/ReportCardGuide.pdf.aspx>.
3. “2014–2015 Report Card for Triway Junior High School,” Ohio School Report Cards, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/School-Report.aspx?SchoolIRN=O61622>.
4. Ibid.

OKLAHOMA



Because it is based on growth to proficiency, Oklahoma's accountability system gives schools a strong incentive to ignore their high achievers.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Oklahoma's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014–15 school year. We do not examine the quality of Oklahoma's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES OKLAHOMA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Oklahoma does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Oklahoma uses a growth-to-proficiency model. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Oklahoma does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. ³
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 25 percent of a school’s summative rating, and even this measure is based on growth to proficiency. (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A⁴

A-F Report Card

2014-2015

Grades 06 - 08

District: BRISTOW

19 1002 505

School: BRISTOW MS

2015 Student Achievement (50%)¹

Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	349	74	C
Mathematics/Algebra I	357	69	D
Science	108	53	F
Social Studies/Geography/US History	234	69	D
Writing	***	***	***
Overall 2015 Student Performance Grade	1048	69	D

Overall Student Growth (Progress Towards Proficiency) (25%)²

Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	338	81	B
Mathematics/Algebra I	346	78	C
Overall 2015 Student Growth Grade	684	80	B

Bottom Quartile Student Growth (Progress Toward Proficiency)(25%)³

Subject	# of Students	Performance Index	Letter Grade
Reading	83	47	F
Mathematics/Algebra I	85	54	F
Overall Bottom Quartile Growth Grade	168	51	F

Bonus Points (Maximum 10 Points)⁴

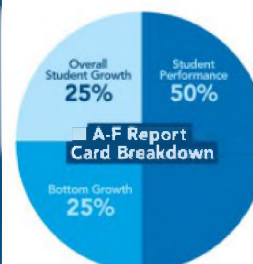
Category	Points Earned
Attendance Rate	8 (95%)
Dropout Rate	2 (<5%)
Advanced Coursework	0 (Participation <5%)
Total	8

FINAL GRADE

75 C

C
75School Performance
Grading Scale

Grade Range	Letter Grade
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
Below 60	F



¹2015 Student Achievement: 50% of the overall grade is based on the Oklahoma School Testing Program assessments in grades three (3) through high school.

²Overall Student Growth: 25% of the grade is based on annual student learning gains as measured by Oklahoma's standardized assessments in reading and mathematics in grades three(3) through eight (8); and Algebra I and English II end-of-instruction tests.

³Bottom Quartile Student Growth: 25% of the grade is based on the growth of the bottom 25% of incoming students as measured by Oklahoma's standardized assessments in reading and mathematics in grades three(3) through eight(8); and Algebra I and English II end-of-instruction tests.

⁴Up to 10 bonus points are awarded for factors including attendance, dropout rate, advanced coursework, college entrance exams, graduation rate, overall performance and year to year growth. The categories for bonus points are determined by grades served at the site.

*** Insufficient number of students' scores to display results.

ENDNOTES

1. “A to F Report Card Calculation Guide,” Oklahoma State Department of Education, page 8, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/AtoFReportCardGuide.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 13.
3. “Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) Calculation Guide,” Oklahoma State Department of Education, page 1, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/AMO%20guide.pdf>.
4. “A–F Report Card 2014–2015 Bristow MS,” Oklahoma State Department of Education, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://afreportcards.ok.gov/Files/ReportCards2015/201519l002505.pdf>.

OREGON



THREE STARS OUT OF FOUR

Oregon's accountability system is one of the best in the country for high achievers thanks to its strong emphasis on growth and inclusion of "talented and gifted students" as a separate reporting group. Rewarding schools that help students achieve at an "advanced" level would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest "proficiency" bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry "substantial" weight and, in the aggregate, must count "much more" than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Oregon's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014–15 school year. We do not examine the quality of Oregon's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES OREGON’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Oregon does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Oregon uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Oregon includes “talented and gifted” students as a subgroup and reports their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for 50 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

OUTCOMES FOR KEY STUDENT GROUPS AT THIS SCHOOL COMPARED TO THE SAME GROUPS STATEWIDE

STUDENT GROUP OUTCOMES	School Performance (%)	Oregon Performance (%)	Like-School Average (%)	School Performance (%)	Oregon Performance (%)	Like-School Average (%)	School Performance (%)	Oregon Performance (%)	Like-School Average (%)				
	Economically Disadvantaged			American Indian/Alaska Native			Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander						
	Eng. Lang. Arts	37.9	43.8	43.3	Eng. Lang. Arts	66.7	37.8	48.4	Eng. Lang. Arts	*	44.8	42.3	
	Mathematics	33.5	29.4	30.9	Mathematics	66.7	25.3	33.0	Mathematics	*	31.1	33.9	
	Science	46.7	53.8	53.4	Science	*	50.2	55.2	Science	*	43.7	40.9	
	English Learners			Asian			White						
	Eng. Lang. Arts	22.9	37.1	36.3	Eng. Lang. Arts	84.6	74.8	74.6	Eng. Lang. Arts	75.9	62.1	68.1	
	Mathematics	22.4	25.6	27.2	Mathematics	84.6	69.1	69.2	Mathematics	73.2	47.8	55.5	
	Science	23.3	40.9	44.3	Science	*	72.3	75.0	Science	90.3	72.7	77.4	
	Students with Disabilities			Black/African American			Female						
Eng. Lang. Arts	30.3	19.5	19.7	Eng. Lang. Arts	28.9	37.2	44.9	Eng. Lang. Arts	73.1	63.5	68.9		
Mathematics	41.3	14.5	15.8	Mathematics	25.0	22.2	28.2	Mathematics	60.2	43.3	50.7		
Science	45.5	31.7	29.3	Science	15.8	36.5	47.8	Science	66.7	63.8	68.3		
Migrant			Hispanic/Latino			Male							
Eng. Lang. Arts	30.0	32.3	27.1	Eng. Lang. Arts	30.8	39.5	39.9	Eng. Lang. Arts	54.8	49.7	53.8		
Mathematics	20.0	19.4	16.5	Mathematics	26.3	25.3	27.3	Mathematics	56.7	41.7	47.1		
Science	*	36.7	41.2	Science	41.2	45.3	47.6	Science	74.5	66.0	69.8		
Talented and Gifted			Multi-Racial			Note: a "*" is displayed when data are unavailable or to protect student confidentiality.							
Eng. Lang. Arts	86.8	96.1	>95	Eng. Lang. Arts	78.0							60.9	68.3
Mathematics	91.9	94.1	>95	Mathematics	64.7							45.9	54.3
Science	92.6	97.2	>95	Science	81.8	67.5	75.9						

EXHIBIT B⁴

Table 20. Rating Indicators and Weights by School Type

Rating Indicator	Weights by School Type		
	Elementary/Middle	Combined	High
Achievement	25	20	20
Growth	50	30	20
Subgroup Growth	25	15	10
Graduation	Not Applicable	25	35
Subgroup Graduation		10	15

ENDNOTES

1. “Report Card Rating Policy and Technical Manual,” Oregon Department of Education, pages 7–9, accessed May 9, 2016, http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/data/schoolanddistrict/reportcard/docs/rc_rating_policy_technical_manual_1314.pdf.
2. “2011–12 Next Generation Accountability Policy and Technical Manual,” Oregon Department of Education, page 11, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/policy/accountability/nextgen2012/nextgenaccountabilitymanual2012.pdf>.
3. “Oregon Report Card 2014–2015 Beaumont Middle School,” Oregon Department of Education, page 2, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/data/reportcard/reports.aspx>.
4. “Report Card Rating Policy and Technical Manual,” 28.

PENNSYLVANIA



Pennsylvania's accountability system rewards schools that help students achieve at an "advanced" level. Assigning more weight to growth would improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Pennsylvania's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013–14 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Pennsylvania's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:


1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.


3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES PENNSYLVANIA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Pennsylvania gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Pennsylvania uses a multivariate value-added model. ² A multivariate value-added model estimates a school’s contribution to students’ academic growth by comparing their actual growth to their expected growth based on prior achievement and other factors.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Pennsylvania does not include “gifted students,” “high achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Pennsylvania comes close. “Growth for all students” counts for 40 percent of a school’s summative rating. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴


Pennsylvania School Performance Profile


pennsylvania
 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Tom Wolf, Governor / Pedro Rivera, Secretary

[Select a New County](#)
[Return to Previous Page](#)
Oswayo Valley MS
[View District Information](#)
[View Historical Information](#)
[Fast Facts](#)
[Scoring](#)
[Academic Performance](#)
[2013-14 SPP](#)
[Compare](#)
[School Supports](#)

School Fast Facts

School Specifics		Percent Enrollment By Ethnicity	
<u>School Name</u>	Oswayo Valley MS	<u>American Indian/Alaskan Native (not Hispanic)</u>	0
<u>School Address</u>	318 South Oswayo St Shinglehouse, PA 16743	<u>Asian (not Hispanic)</u>	1.05
<u>Website</u>	http://www.oswayovalley.com	<u>Black or African American (not Hispanic)</u>	0
<u>Telephone Number</u>	814-260-1701	<u>Hispanic (any race)</u>	0
<u>Grades Offered</u>	6, 7, 8	<u>Multi-Racial (not Hispanic)</u>	1.05
<u>Title I School</u>	Y	<u>White (not Hispanic)</u>	97.89
<u>Average Years of Educational Experience (Total)</u>	17.8	<u>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (not Hispanic)</u>	0
<u>Average Years of Educational Experience (in LEA)</u>	15.2		
<u>Percent of Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers</u>	100.00	Percent Enrollment by Student Groups	
<u>School Enrollment</u>	93	<u>Economically Disadvantaged</u>	54.74
<u>Percent of Gifted Students</u>	3.16	<u>English Language Learner</u>	0
<u>Dropout Rate (Percent)</u>	0.00	<u>Special Education</u>	23.16
		Percent Enrollment by Gender	
		<u>Female</u>	48.42
		<u>Male</u>	51.53

Supporting Intermediate Unit (IU)	
<u>Intermediate Unit Name</u>	Seneca Highlands IU 9
<u>Intermediate Unit Website</u>	http://www.iu9.org

ENDNOTES

1. "Pennsylvania School Performance Profile Frequently Asked Questions," Pennsylvania Department of Education, page 3, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://paschoolperformance.org/FAQ>.
2. "Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System," Pennsylvania Department of Education, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/Pennsylvania%20Value%20Added%20Assessment%20System/Pages/default.aspx#.VzDjCgIrdU>.
3. "Pennsylvania School Performance Profile Frequently Asked Questions," 3.
4. "Pennsylvania School Performance Profile Oswayo Valley MS," Pennsylvania Department of Education, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://paschoolperformance.org/Profile/5027>.

RHODE ISLAND



*Rhode Island's accountability system rewards schools that help students achieve at an advanced level.
But assigning more weight to growth would improve the system.*

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Rhode Island's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014–15 school year. We do not examine the quality of Rhode Island's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES RHODE ISLAND’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Rhode Island gives additional credit for students achieving at the “Distinction Level.” ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Rhode Island uses a student growth percentile model. ¹ A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Rhode Island does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for 9–26 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

2015 Rhode Island School Summary

[View Accountability Summary](#) | [View State Accountability Summary](#) | [Print](#) 

RI SCHOOL: **Archie R. Cole Middle School**
 RI DISTRICT: **East Greenwich**
 School Attendance Rate: **96.8%**

[View Spanish Version](#) | [Printing Instructions](#) | [Read Quick Guide](#) | [Test Results - Summary](#) | [Test Results - Complete](#)

Student Group	Proficiency Score, 2014-15		Percent of Students Tested, 2014-15			
	READING % Proficient	MATHEMATICS % Proficient	READING Part. Rate Target: 96%		MATHEMATICS Part Rate Target: 96%	
	THIS SCHOOL	THIS SCHOOL	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?
All Students	78.2	64.9	96.4	YES	96.4	YES
African-American	**	**	**	**	**	**
Asian	100.0	100.0	100.0	YES	100.0	YES
Pacific Islander	**	**	**	**	**	**
Hispanic	73.9	65.2	100.0	YES	100.0	YES
Native American	**	**	**	**	**	**
White	78.0	63.2	95.8	YES	95.8	YES
Multi-Racial	**	**	**	**	**	**
Students with Disabilities	37.3	16.9	90.8	NO	90.8	NO
English-Language Learners	**	**	**	**	**	**
Economically Disadvantaged Students	55.2	31.0	96.7	YES	96.7	YES
Minority Consolidated Sub-Group	79.7	68.9	98.7	YES	98.7	YES
Program Consolidated Sub-Group	38.7	17.7	91.2	NO	91.2	NO

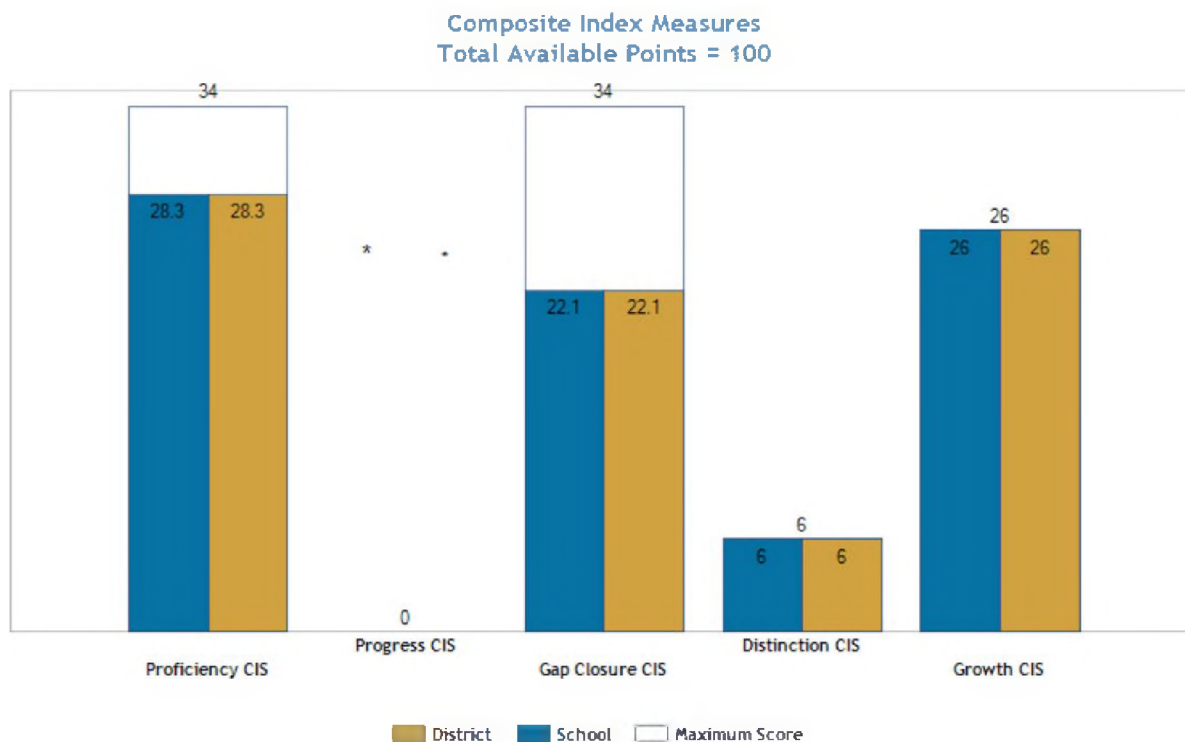
KEY: * Student group has too few students for evaluation.
 ** Student group with no students for evaluation.
 † Student group has fallen short of the target but has made sufficient progress.

NOTE: For information on targets and classifications, please see Quick Guide.

EXHIBIT B⁴

2015 Rhode Island School Accountability Summary

RI SCHOOL: Archie R. Cole Middle School
 RI DISTRICT: East Greenwich



* Student subgroups in metric have too few students for evaluation.

This School Is Classified As			
Commended			
Comprehensive Index Scores for 2014-15 PARCC administration are based on an abbreviated accountability model and on the results from a new set of state assessments (PARCC assessments). Therefore 2014-15 index scores are not comparable to scores from previous years. Rules and procedure RIDE previously used to determine school classifications are no longer in place.			
School	District	State	Total Points
82.4	82.4	45.2	100.0

ENDNOTES

1. “Rhode Island Accountability System – Technical Bulletin,” Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, page 10, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.eride.ri.gov/eride40/reportcards/15/documents/RIAccountabilitySystemTechnicalBulletin.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 11.
3. “2015 Rhode Island School Summary - Archie R. Cole Middle School,” Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://www.eride.ri.gov/eride40/reportcards/15/SchoolReportCard.aspx?scode=09103&schType=2>.
4. Ibid.

SOUTH CAROLINA



South Carolina encourages schools to pay attention to high-achieving students by including them in its growth model and giving additional credit for “advanced” achievement. Separately reporting high achievers’ results would further improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools’ impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB’s requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether South Carolina's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of South Carolina's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES SOUTH CAROLINA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		South Carolina gives additional credit for students achieving at an “exemplary” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		South Carolina uses a categorical growth model. ² A categorical growth model compares the performance-level categories that students fall into from one year to the next.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		South Carolina does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	South Carolina does not roll growth and achievement into one summative school rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

J.S. Wright Middle School					4/27/2015	0160016	
SC PASS Performance By Group - ESEA/Federal Accountability							
Subgroups	ELA Mean	Math Mean	Science Mean	Social Studies Mean*	ELA % Tested	Math % Tested	Science % Tested
Grades 6-8							
All Students	642.0	647.9	655.7	653.1	98.8	98.8	99.6
Male	632.4	639.7	652.4	653.3	99.1	99.1	99.3
Female	653.8	657.9	659.6	652.8	98.4	98.4	100.0
White	668.0	669.9	683.2	676.1	98.6	98.6	99.2
African American	616.5	626.6	631.3	629.1	100.0	100.0	100.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
American Indian/Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
With Disabilities	597.6	606.1	608.4	626.3	96.6	96.6	100.0
Limited English Proficient	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Subsidized Meals	627.7	634.6	639.6	638.6	98.5	98.5	99.5
Migrant	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Annual Measurable Objective (AMO)	632.0	632.0	632.0	632.0	95.0	95.0	95.0

EXHIBIT B⁴**J.S. Wright Middle School**

111 Highway 71
Abbeville, SC 29620

Grades	6-8 Middle School	
Enrollment	424 Students	
Principal	Dick Williams	864-366-5898
Superintendent	Dr. Sharon Wall, Interim	864-366-5427
Board Chair	Tim Rhodes	864-378-5585

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

2014

ANNUAL SCHOOL

REPORT CARD

RATINGS OVER 5-YEAR PERIOD

YEAR	ABSOLUTE RATING	GROWTH RATING
2014	Excellent	Good
2013	Excellent	Good
2012	Excellent	Excellent
2011	Good	Good
2010	Good	Good

DEFINITIONS OF SCHOOL RATING TERMS

- **Excellent** - School performance substantially exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2020 SC Performance Vision
- **Good** - School performance exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2020 SC Performance Vision
- **Average** - School performance meets the standards for progress toward the 2020 SC Performance Vision
- **Below Average** - School is in jeopardy of not meeting the standards for progress toward the 2020 SC Performance Vision
- **At-Risk** - School performance fails to meet the standards for progress toward the 2020 SC Performance Vision

ENDNOTES

1. “2013–2014 Accountability Manual,” South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, page 16, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.eoc.sc.gov/Reports%20%20Publications/Current%20Reports%202008-14/Accountability/2013-14%20Accountability%20Manual/2013-14%20Accountability%20Manual.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 32–33.
3. “2014 J.S. Wright Middle School Annual Report Card,” South Carolina Department of Education, page 6, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://ed.sc.gov/assets/reportCards/2014/middle/c/m0160016.pdf>.
4. Ibid, 1.

SOUTH DAKOTA



Regrettably, South Dakota’s accountability system gives schools a strong incentive to ignore high-achieving students—or any students not in the bottom quartile at their schools.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools’ impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB’s requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether South Dakota's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015-2016 school year. We do not examine the quality of South Dakota's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

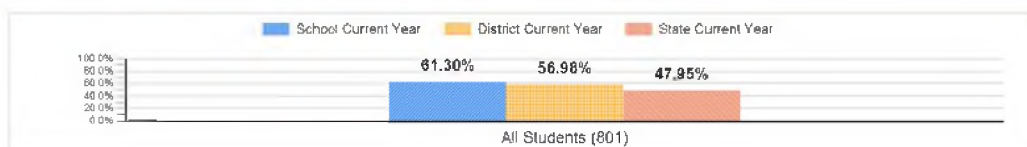
DOES SOUTH DAKOTA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		South Dakota does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		South Dakota uses a student growth percentile model but only to determine and reward growth to proficiency. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		South Dakota does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 20 percent of a school’s summative rating, and even this measure is based on growth to proficiency. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴South Dakota DOE
2014–2015 Report Card

Sioux Falls 49-5 | Edison Middle School - 06

Student Achievement: ELA Level 3 and Level 4 Rate



Student Achievement: ELA Level 3 and Level 4 Rate - Data Matrix

Subgroup	Number of Students	School Current Year Level 3 and Level 4 Percentage	District Current Year Level 3 and Level 4 Percentage	State Current Year Level 3 and Level 4 Percentage
All Students	801	61.30	56.98	47.95
Hispanic / Latino	46	43.48	35.65	35.26
American Indian / Alaskan Native	38	23.68	27.78	19.71
Asian	21	76.19	44.75	43.10
Black / African American	58	29.31	26.70	30.23
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	*			50.00
White / Caucasian	618	67.80	65.98	53.68
Multi-Racial	20	50.00	50.45	43.54
Student With Disabilities	117	18.80	14.00	11.08
English Language Learners	12	8.33	6.08	5.71
Economically Disadvantaged	325	37.23	34.35	31.43
Female	355	67.89	64.44	55.34
Male	446	56.05	50.04	40.89
Migrant	+		3.92	8.26
Gap	384	38.02	34.82	30.66
Non-Gap	417	82.73	79.28	63.93

* No data will display at the school, district, or state level if the subgroup does not meet minimum size for reporting purposes.

The Gap group includes any student who belongs to one or more of the following subgroups: Black; Hispanic; American Indian/ Alaskan Native; English Language Learner; Special Education; Economically Disadvantaged. Students not belonging to any of these groups are included in the Non-Gap group.

ENDNOTES

1. “Public School Accountability System,” South Dakota Department of Education, pages 4–5, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://doe.sd.gov/secretary/documents/AccModSum.pdf>.
2. “South Dakota’s Growth Model From Student Growth Percentiles to School Accountability Scores,” South Dakota Department of Education, pages 5–14, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://doe.sd.gov/secretary/documents/O615-SGP2.pdf>.
3. Ibid, 15.
4. “South Dakota DOE 2014–2015 Report Card Edison Middle School,” South Dakota Student Teacher Accountability and Reporting System, page 3, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://doe.sd.gov/NCLB/reports/2015/reportcard/2015school49005-06.pdf>.

TENNESSEE



Tennessee includes high-achieving student in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Tennessee's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Tennessee's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.

DOES TENNESSEE’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?




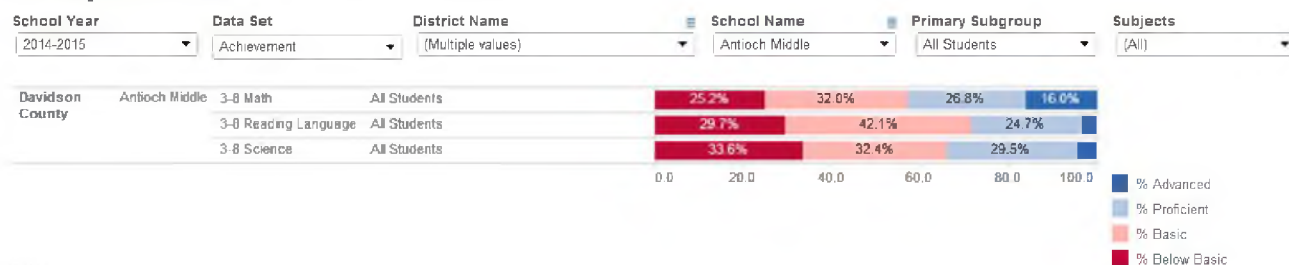
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Tennessee does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level, though it does report these data. ¹ (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Tennessee uses a multivariate value-added model. ² A multivariate value-added model estimates a school’s contribution to students’ academic growth by comparing their actual growth to their expected growth based on prior achievement and other factors.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Tennessee does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?	NA	Tennessee does not calculate summative school ratings at this time, though state law requires that it adopt a system of letter grades by 2017–2018.

EXHIBIT A³

Comparisons - Achievement

EXHIBIT B⁴

Numeric Data: Davidson County, Antioch Middle

		Current					Previous				
		% Below Basic	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient..	% Below Basic	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient..
3-8 Math	All Students	25.2%	32.0%	26.8%	16.0%	42.8%	27.6%	34.8%	24.3%	13.3%	37.6%
	Asian	17.3%	34.6%	25.0%	23.1%	48.1%	25.6%	39.5%	23.3%	11.6%	34.9%
	Black or African American	33.4%	32.5%	22.2%	11.9%	34.1%	36.6%	30.9%	21.1%	11.4%	32.5%
	Hispanic or Latino	21.8%	35.0%	28.2%	15.0%	43.2%	26.4%	35.0%	28.3%	10.3%	38.6%
	White	19.4%	25.6%	32.9%	21.9%	54.8%	17.0%	38.8%	23.6%	20.6%	44.2%
	Hispanic, Black, or Native American	27.8%	33.7%	25.1%	13.4%	38.5%	31.7%	32.9%	24.6%	16.8%	35.4%
	Economically Disadvantaged Students	25.0%	32.5%	26.1%	16.4%	42.5%	29.2%	35.2%	23.2%	12.4%	35.6%
	NOT Economically Disadvantaged Students	25.3%	28.9%	32.5%	13.3%	45.8%	22.0%	33.1%	28.3%	16.6%	44.9%
	English Language Learner Students	30.9%	41.4%	19.1%	8.6%	27.7%	30.5%	40.3%	24.0%	5.2%	29.2%
	NOT English Language Learner Students	23.3%	29.2%	29.2%	18.3%	47.5%	26.9%	33.1%	24.4%	15.6%	40.0%
3-8 Reading Language	Students with Disabilities	61.6%	17.9%	5.1%	15.4%	20.5%	47.0%	19.3%	9.6%	24.1%	33.7%
	Students with NO Disability	20.5%	33.8%	29.6%	16.1%	45.7%	25.1%	36.9%	26.3%	11.7%	38.0%
	All Students	29.7%	42.1%	24.7%	3.5%	28.2%	25.5%	44.0%	25.9%	4.6%	30.5%
	Asian	37.7%	47.2%	11.3%	3.8%	15.1%	53.5%	30.2%	14.0%	2.3%	16.3%
	Black or African American	31.9%	42.6%	22.7%	2.8%	25.5%	27.2%	45.1%	23.6%	4.1%	27.7%
	Hispanic or Latino	27.4%	44.4%	25.6%	2.6%	28.2%	25.9%	46.4%	24.6%	3.1%	27.7%
	White	27.1%	36.1%	31.0%	5.8%	36.8%	15.8%	42.4%	33.9%	7.9%	41.8%
	Hispanic, Black, or Native American	29.7%	43.5%	24.1%	2.7%	26.8%	26.4%	45.8%	24.2%	3.6%	27.8%
	Economically Disadvantaged Students	30.2%	42.2%	24.2%	3.4%	27.6%	28.2%	44.9%	22.5%	4.4%	26.9%
	NOT Economically Disadvantaged Students	26.8%	41.5%	28.0%	3.7%	31.7%	16.4%	40.8%	37.5%	5.3%	42.8%
	English Language Learner Students	59.5%	31.1%	7.5%	1.9%	9.4%	49.4%	39.0%	9.7%	1.9%	11.6%
	NOT English Language Learner Students	20.7%	45.5%	29.9%	3.9%	33.8%	18.7%	45.4%	30.6%	5.3%	35.9%
	Students with Disabilities	62.3%	22.1%	3.9%	11.7%	15.6%	34.9%	20.5%	20.5%	24.1%	44.6%
	Students with NO Disability	25.7%	44.6%	27.3%	2.4%	29.7%	24.4%	47.2%	26.6%	1.8%	28.4%

Values labeled "****" are suppressed because there were fewer than 10 valid tests. Blank values have been suppressed either because more than 99 percent or less than 1 percent of students scored in a particular proficiency category. This suppression is performed in accordance with federal privacy laws.

ENDNOTES

1. "State Report Card," Tennessee Department of Education, accessed May 16, 2016 <http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/report-card>.
2. "Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS)," Tennessee Department of Education, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://tvaas.sas.com/welcome.html?as=e&aj=e>.
3. "Accountability Report – 2014–2015 Antioch Middle School Report Card," Tennessee Department of Education, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/report-card>.
4. Ibid.

TEXAS



Texas includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Texas' accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Texas' standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES TEXAS’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

How many of these strategies does Texas’ accountability system incorporate? Let’s take a look.

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Texas does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Texas uses a gain score growth model. ¹ A gain score model measures the absolute improvement in students’ achievement (in points) using a common scale.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Texas does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for 25 percent of a school’s summative rating. It is one of four standards used to evaluate schools. (See Exhibit C.)

- Each percentage of tests that meet or exceed the performance standard contributes one point to the index score.
- Index scores range from 0 to 100. Because Index 1 has only one component, the total index points and index score are the same.

	Reading		Mathematics (Alg. I only in 2015)		Writing		Science		Social Studies		Total	% Met Phase-in 1 Level II	Index Points
Tests Met or Exceeded Performance Standard	50	+	38	+	19	+	10	+	19	=	136	45%	45
Total Tests	100	+	100	+	42	+	40	+	23	=	305		
Index 1 Score													45

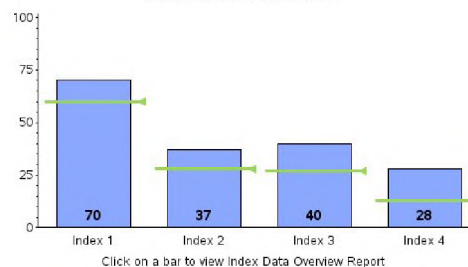
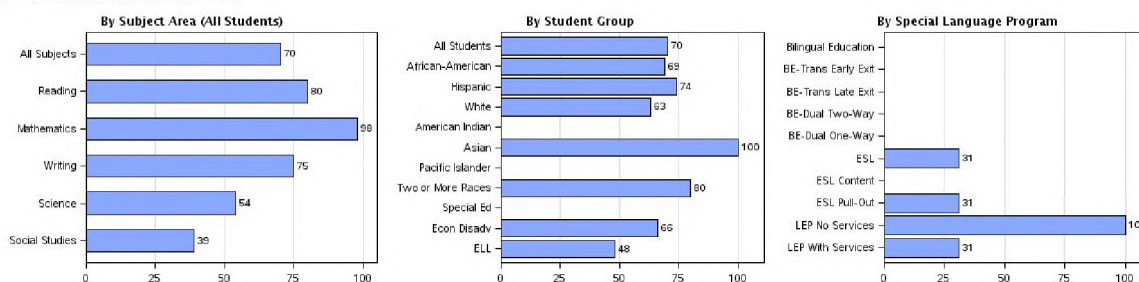
EXHIBIT B³

DESOTO WEST MIDDLE (057906042) - DESOTO ISD

2014-15 Campus Demographics

DESOTO WEST MIDDLE	
Campus Type	Middle School
Campus Size	709 Students
Grade Span	06 - 08
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	68.0
Percent English Language Learners	2.8
Mobility Rate	12.8
Percent Served by Special Education Programs	14.5%
Percent Unschooled Asylees or Refugees	0.0%

2014-15 Performance Index

2015 STAAR Passing Rate
(Percent at Phase-in Satisfactory Standard or Above)

For student groups or special language programs with fewer than five students, the STAAR passing rates are not shown on the bar graph to protect student confidentiality.

EXHIBIT C ⁴

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
2015 Accountability Summary
 DESOTO WEST MIDDLE (057906042) - DESOTO ISD

Accountability Rating**Met Standard****Met Standards on**

- Student Achievement
- Student Progress
- Closing Performance Gaps
- Postsecondary Readiness

Did Not Meet Standards on

- NONE

In 2015, to receive a Met Standard or Met Alternative Standard rating, districts and campuses must meet targets on three indexes: Index 1 or Index 2 and Index 3 and Index 4.

Distinction Designation

Academic Achievement in Reading/ELA

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Academic Achievement in Mathematics

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Academic Achievement in Science

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Academic Achievement in Social Studies

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Top 25 Percent Student Progress

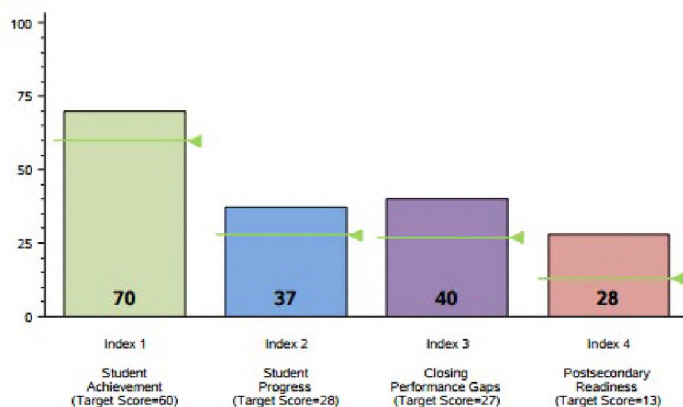
DISTINCTION EARNED

Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Postsecondary Readiness

NO DISTINCTION EARNED

Performance Index Report**Campus Demographics**

Campus Type

Middle School

Campus Size

709 Students

Grade Span

06 - 08

ENDNOTES

1. "State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Progress Measure Questions and Answers," Texas Education Agency, page 2, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769811321&libID=25769811338>.
2. "2016 Accountability Manual for Texas Public School Districts and Campuses," Texas Education Agency-Department of Assessment and Accountability Division of Performance Reporting, pages 14–15, accessed May 10, 2016, <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2015/2015Accountability.pdf>.
3. "Texas School Accountability Dashboard-Desoto West Middle School," Texas Education Agency, accessed May 10, 2016, https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&year4=2015&year2=15&_debug=0&topic=src&gifname=g_src2012&sublevel=camp&single=N&title=Texas+School+Accountability+Dashboard&_program=perf rept.perfmast.sas&rpt=single&ptype=P&level=campus&prgopt=2015%2Fdashboard%2Fdashboard.all&search=campname&namenum=desoto&campus=057906042&prgopt=2014%2Fdashboard%2Fdashboard.sas.
4. "2015 Accountability Summary-Desoto West Middle School," Texas Education Agency, accessed May 10, 2016, <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2015/static/summary/campus/c057906042.pdf>.

UTAH



Utah includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Utah's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Utah's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES UTAH’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Utah does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Utah uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Utah does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 25 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A³

SAGE Results for AMERICAN FORK JR HIGH by Demographic Group

Demographic Categories	Language Arts % Prof	Mathematics % Prof	Science % Prof
All Students	55.0%	58.0%	58.5%
African American	21%-29%	21%-29%	30%-39%
American Indian	N<10	N<10	N<10
Asian	50%-59%	50%-59%	50%-59%
Caucasian	57.6%	62.0%	62.1%
Hispanic	30.6%	21.4%	26.1%
Multiple Races	47.8%	48.9%	51.1%
Pacific Islander	N<10	N<10	N<10
Female	62.1%	57.4%	55.1%
Male	48.2%	58.6%	61.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	33.1%	34.5%	40.5%
Limited English Proficiency	≤10%	≤10%	≤10%
Students with Disabilities	7.9%	14.6%	15.9%
Mobile	56.1%	51.3%	56.2%

EXHIBIT B⁴

[Accountability Reports](#)
[Data Catalog & Resources](#)
[Data Reports](#)
[News & Updates](#)

School Grade for AMERICAN FORK JR HIGH

School Year
2014/2015

District
ALPINE DISTRICT

School
AMERICAN FORK

AMERICAN FORK JR HIGH (ALPINE DISTRICT School Year: 2015)

Elementary Grade: B Points: 368/600 61 %

All Students Participation Rate: 100 % *

Below Proficient Participation Rate: 100 % *

Proficiency Total: 173/300

Language Arts	55/100
Mathematics	59/100
Science	59/100

Growth Total: 195/300

All Students

Language Arts	32/50
Mathematics	33/50
Science	30/50

Below Proficient

Language Arts	33/50
Mathematics	36/50
Science	31/50

ENDNOTES

1. "2015 Utah Accountability Technical Manual," Utah State Department of Education, page 14, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://schools.utah.gov/assessment/Accountability/TechnicalManual.aspx>.
2. Ibid.
3. "SAGE Results for American Fork JR HIGH," Utah State Office of Education, accessed May 10, 2016, <https://datagateway.schools.utah.gov/Assessment/SAGE/2015?leaNum=01&schNum=404>.
4. "School Grade for American Fork JR HS," Utah State Office of Education, accessed May 10, 2016, <https://datagateway.schools.utah.gov/Accountability/SchoolGrades/2015?leaNum=01&schNum=404&schoolGradeType=E>.

VERMONT



Because it is based almost entirely on proficiency rates, Vermont's accountability system gives schools a strong incentive to ignore high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Vermont's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Vermont's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES VERMONT’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Vermont does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Vermont does not use a growth model at this time. ²
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Vermont does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” does not count toward a school’s summative rating. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

School Accountability System Based on Student Performance
2014 Adequate Yearly Progress Report (Based on 2013 Results)

Bellows Falls Middle School (Windham Northeast S.U.)



Did not make AYP. Title I Year 6 Corrective Action.

READING Title I Year 3 Corrective Action

Did not meet requirements in Reading for all students, free/reduced lunch students, white students.

MATH Title I Year 6 Corrective Action

Did not meet requirements in Mathematics for all students, free/reduced lunch students, white students.

ACADEMIC INDICATOR

Met the Academic Indicator.

PARTICIPATION

Met all Participation requirements.

Group	AYP Decisions				Academic Indicator			Participation	
	Reading Index (1)	Math Index (2)	Academic Indicator (3)	Participation (4)	Number (5)	Indicator (6)	LCB (7)	Total Students (8)	Percent Tested (9)
All Students	NO	NO	YES	YES	147	14%	8%	232	100%
Not Free/Reduced Lunch (For Reporting Only)					79	1%	0%	116	100%
Free/Reduced Lunch	NO	NO		YES	68	29%	17%	116	100%
Without Disability (For Reporting Only)					119	8%	2%	193	100%
With Disability	N<40	N<40		N<40	28	43%	21%	39	100%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	N<40	N<40		N<40	0			++	++
Asian	N<40	N<40		N<40	++	++	++	++	++
African American	N<40	N<40		N<40	++	++	++	++	++
Hispanic or Latino	N<40	N<40		N<40	++	++	++	++	++
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	N<40	N<40		N<40	0			++	++
White	NO	NO		YES	142	14%	7%	225	100%
Not English Language Learner (For Reporting Only)					147	14%	8%	232	100%
English Language Learner	N<40	N<40		N<40	0			0	

1-AYP decision for Reading. No decision is made for subgroups with less than 40 students in the index.

2-AYP decision for Mathematics. No decision is made for subgroups with less than 40 students in the index.

3-Accountability decision for the Academic Indicator. Academic Indicator must be met for All Students. No decisions are made for subgroups.

4-Accountability decision for Participation. Participation rate must be at least 95% for any group in which there are 40 or more students in the testing cohort.

5-Number of students in the Academic Indicator.

6-Academic Indicator is the percentage of students in the lowest achievement level of the reading test.

7-Lower boundary of the Academic Indicator confidence interval. The LCB must be below 15% to meet the indicator.

8-Total number of students in the Participation Rate calculation. This is the total number of students expected to be tested.

9-Percentage of students tested.

8/6/2014

Page 1

ENDNOTES

1. "Accountability Operations Manual: Vermont Accountability System Based on Student Achievement," Vermont Department of Education, pages 5–6, accessed May 18, 2016, http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Accountability_Operations_Manual_March_2011.pdf.
2. "State of Vermont Million Dollar Technology Project Report," Vermont Enterprise Project Management Office-Department of Information and Innovation, pages 34–37, accessed May 18, 2016, <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/jfo/reports/VT%20Million%20Dollar%20Technology%20Report%202016.pdf>.
3. "Accountability Operations Manual: Vermont Accountability System Based on Student Achievement," 5.
4. "2014 AYP Report-Bellow Falls Middle School," Vermont Agency of Education, page 1, accessed May 18, 2016, http://education.vermont.gov/documents/SCH_ACO24_14.pdf.

VIRGINIA



Because Virginia's accountability system is based entirely on proficiency rates, schools have a strong incentive to ignore their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Virginia's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2015–16 school year. We do not examine the quality of Virginia's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES VIRGINIA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?

INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Virginia does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Virginia uses a student growth percentile model that includes all students. ² However, because growth doesn’t count toward a school’s summative rating and isn’t publicly reported, we give no credit for this indicator.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Virginia does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” does not count toward a school’s summative rating. ³

EXHIBIT A⁴

Percentage of Students Passing and Tested in English Reading and Mathematics

Only student subgroups represented are listed.

Student Subgroup	Type	2013-2014			2014-2015			2015-2016		
		Passed	Tested	Not Tested	Passed	Tested	Not Tested	Passed	Tested	Not Tested
English Performance										
All Students	School	75	100	0	78	100	0	80	100	0
	Division	82	100	0	86	100	0	87	100	0
	State	74	100	0	79	100	0	80	100	0
Female	School	78	100	0	85	100	0	83	100	0
	Division	84	100	0	89	100	0	88	100	0
	State	78	100	0	82	100	0	82	100	0
Male	School	72	100	0	70	100	0	76	100	0
	Division	80	100	0	84	100	0	85	100	0
	State	71	100	0	76	100	0	77	100	0
Black	School	56	100	0	65	100	0	72	100	0
	Division	67	100	0	74	100	0	74	100	0
	State	59	100	0	65	100	0	66	100	0
Hispanic	School	60	100	0	62	100	0	67	100	0
	Division	64	100	0	71	100	0	73	100	0
	State	65	100	0	71	100	0	71	100	0
White	School	94	100	0	92	100	0	91	100	0
	Division	94	100	0	96	100	0	95	100	0
	State	82	100	0	86	100	0	86	100	0
Asian	School	69	100	0	89	100	0	86	100	0
	Division	84	100	0	90	100	0	90	100	0
	State	87	100	0	90	100	0	91	100	0
American Indian	School	-	-	-	<	<	<	<	<	<
	Division	68	100	0	71	100	0	73	100	0
	State	72	100	0	77	100	0	77	100	0
Two or more races	School	96	100	0	97	100	0	96	100	0
	Division	90	100	0	93	100	0	93	100	0
	State	78	100	0	82	100	0	83	100	0
Students with Disabilities	School	36	100	0	35	100	0	39	100	0
	Division	53	100	0	59	100	0	60	100	0
	State	43	99	1	45	99	1	46	99	1
Economically Disadvantaged	School	52	100	0	55	100	0	59	100	0
	Division	60	100	0	69	100	0	71	100	0
	State	59	100	0	66	100	0	66	100	0
Limited English Proficient	School	46	100	0	44	100	0	40	100	0
	Division	56	100	0	64	100	0	66	100	0
	State	54	100	0	61	100	0	61	100	0
Gap Group 1 - Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students (unduplicated)	School	55	100	0	57	100	0	59	100	0
	Division	63	100	0	71	100	0	72	100	0
	State	59	100	0	65	100	0	66	100	0
Gap Group 2 - Black Students	School	56	100	0	65	100	0	72	100	0
	Division	67	100	0	74	100	0	74	100	0
	State	59	100	0	65	100	0	66	100	0
Gap Group 3 - Hispanic Students	School	60	100	0	62	100	0	67	100	0
	Division	64	100	0	71	100	0	73	100	0
	State	65	100	0	71	100	0	71	100	0

ENDNOTES

1. "Accountability in Virginia Public Schools," Virginia Department of Education, pages 1–3, accessed May 18, 2016, http://www.pen.k12.va.us/statistics_reports/school_report_card/accountability_guide.pdf.
2. "Frequently Asked Questions about Student Growth Models," Virginia Department of Education, page 1, accessed May 18, 2016, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/scoring/student_growth_percentiles/fact_sheet.pdf.
3. "Accountability in Virginia Public Schools," 2.
4. "Gunston Middle School Report Card," Virginia Department of Education, page 4, accessed May 18, 2016, <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/report.do?division=7&schoolName=1961>.

WASHINGTON



Washington's accountability system emphasizes growth, but by prioritizing progress for traditionally low-performing subgroups, it may be giving schools an incentive to ignore their high-achieving students.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Washington's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Washington's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES WASHINGTON’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?



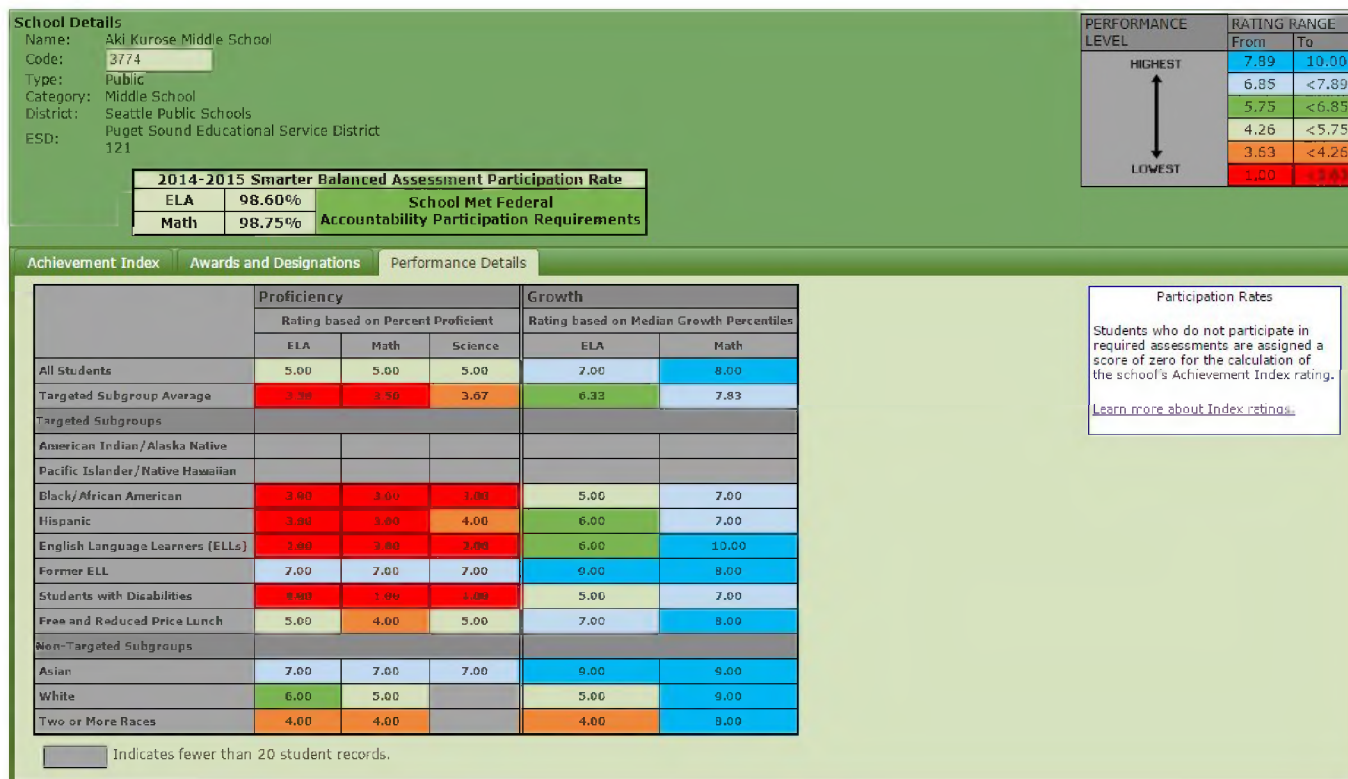
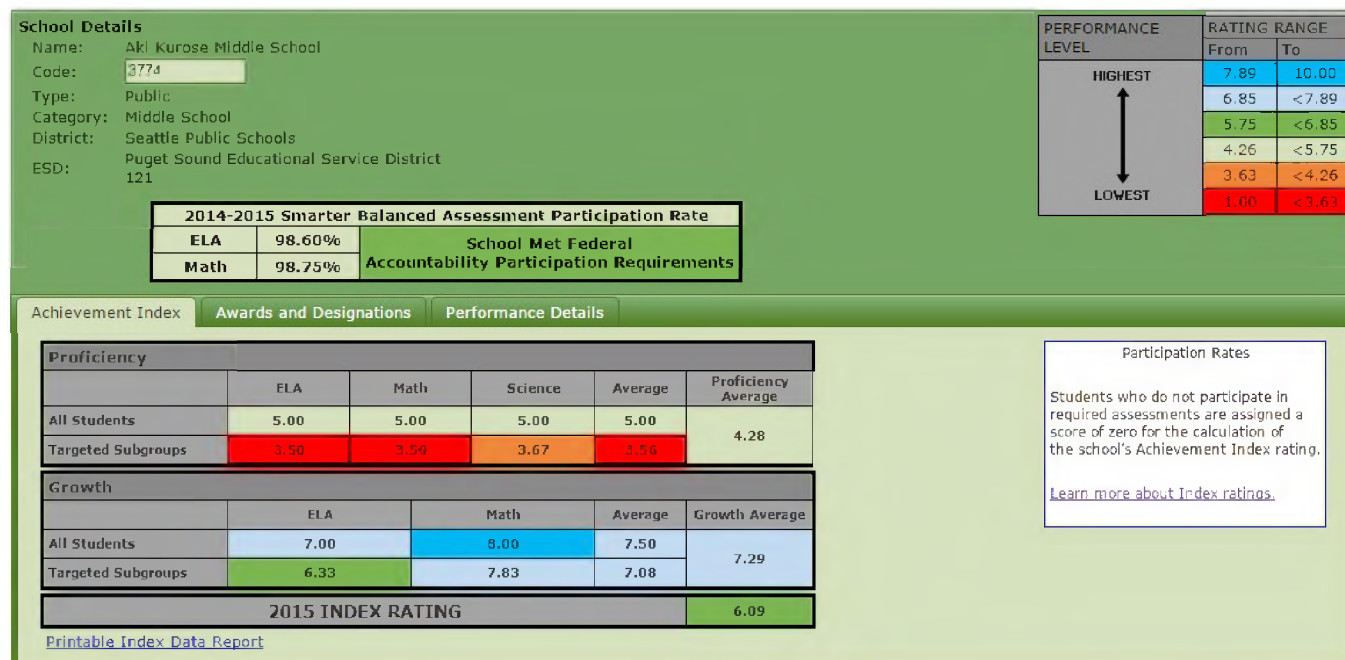
INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Washington does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Washington uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Washington does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		Growth counts for 60 percent of summative school ratings, but “growth for all students” counts for just 30 percent. ³ (See Exhibit A.)

EXHIBIT A⁴

ENDNOTES

1. “Index Methodology,” Washington State Board of Education, page 2, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/AchievementIndex/IndexMethodology.pdf>.
2. “The Achievement Index Glossary of Terms,” Washington State Board of Education, page 4, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/AchievementIndex/IndexGlossary.pdf>.
3. “Index Methodology,” 2–3.
4. “2014–2015 Achievement Index – Aki Kurose Middle School,” Washington State Board of Education, accessed May 16, 2016, <https://eds.ospi.k12.wa.us/WAI/IndexReport/dropdown>.

WEST VIRGINIA



West Virginia includes high-achieving students in its growth model but does little else to encourage schools to pay attention to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether West Virginia's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of West Virginia's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES WEST VIRGINIA’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		West Virginia does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		West Virginia uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		West Virginia does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		West Virginia’s two growth indicators are based on growth to proficiency or growth for specific demographic subgroups. ³ (See Exhibit B.)

EXHIBIT A⁴

EXHIBIT B⁵

Table 5. Weights by Programmatic Level

Category	Elementary/Middle Schools	High Schools
Proficiency Rates in Mathematics and English/Language Arts	40%	35%
Achievement Gaps in Mathematics and English/Language Arts for All Subgroups	20.0%	20.0%
Observed Growth in Mathematics and English/Language Arts for All Subgroups	15%	5%
Adequate Growth in Mathematics and English/Language Arts for All Students	20%	10%
Attendance/Graduation Rates	5% (Attendance)	30% (Graduation)

ENDNOTES

1. “Technical Fact Sheet: Understanding the West Virginia Accountability Index (WVAI),” West Virginia Department of Education, page 1, accessed May 11, 2016, https://wvde.state.wv.us/esea/support/Documents/Technical%20Fact%20Sheet_Understanding%20the%20WV%20Accountability%20Index.pdf.
2. “West Virginia Growth Model: Methods Used and Key Growth Model Terms,” West Virginia Department of Education, accessed May 11, 2016, <https://wvde.state.wv.us/growth/methods.html>.
3. We do not give credit for “Adequate Growth” because it does not reward growth beyond proficiency. (See pages 3–4 of the Technical Fact Sheet.)
4. “2013–2014 State Assessment Summary: Philippi Middle School,” West Virginia Department of Education, accessed May 11, 2016, <https://zoomwv.k12.wv.us/Dashboard/portalHome.jsp>.
5. “Technical Fact Sheet: Understanding the West Virginia Accountability Index (WVAI),” 6.

WISCONSIN



Wisconsin's accountability system rewards schools that help students achieve at a high level. Assigning more weight to growth would improve the system.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Wisconsin's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2013-2014 school year—the most recent year for which information is available. We do not examine the quality of Wisconsin's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES WISCONSIN’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?



INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Wisconsin gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. (See Exhibit A.)
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Wisconsin uses a student growth percentile model. ¹ A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Wisconsin does not include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup or report their results separately. (See Exhibit B.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for just 25 percent of a school’s summative rating. (See Exhibit C.)

EXHIBIT A²

FINAL - PUBLIC REPORT - FOR PUBLIC RELEASE



Adams-Friendship Mid | Adams-Friendship Area

School Report Card Detail | 2013-14 | Student Achievement

Student Achievement**Total Score: 51.4/100****Reading Achievement Score: 22.8/50**

Performance Level	Points Multiplier	2011-12			2012-13			2013-14		
		Students		Points	Students		Points	Students		Points
		Count	Percent		Count	Percent		Count	Percent	
Advanced	1.5	3	0.9%	4.5	6	1.8%	9	8	2.6%	12
Proficient	1.0	73	21.9%	73	64	19.1%	64	69	22.0%	69
Basic	0.5	139	41.6%	69.5	159	47.5%	79.5	129	41.2%	64.5
Minimal Performance	0.0	119	35.6%	0	106	31.6%	0	107	34.2%	0
Total Tested	-	334	100.0%	147	335	100.0%	152.5	313	100.0%	145.5

Mathematics Achievement Score: 28.7/50

Performance Level	Points Multiplier	2011-12			2012-13			2013-14		
		Students		Points	Students		Points	Students		Points
		Count	Percent		Count	Percent		Count	Percent	
Advanced	1.5	16	4.8%	24	23	6.9%	34.5	29	9.2%	43.5
Proficient	1.0	88	26.3%	88	87	26.0%	87	88	28.0%	88
Basic	0.5	145	43.4%	72.5	146	43.6%	73	102	32.5%	51
Minimal Performance	0.0	85	25.4%	0	79	23.6%	0	95	30.3%	0
Total Tested	-	334	100.0%	184.5	335	100.0%	194.5	314	100.0%	182.5

EXHIBIT B³

Adams-Friendship Mid | Adams-Friendship Area

School Report Card Detail | 2013-14 | Student Achievement

Student Achievement

Group performance is provided for informational purposes only and is not used to determine the Student Achievement scores used in the accountability system.

Supplemental Data

Reading Supplemental Data

Group	2011-12					2012-13					2013-14				
	Total Tested	Percent Advanced	Percent Proficient	Percent Basic	Percent Minimal Performance	Total Tested	Percent Advanced	Percent Proficient	Percent Basic	Percent Minimal Performance	Total Tested	Percent Advanced	Percent Proficient	Percent Basic	Percent Minimal Performance
All Students: State	379,355	6.3%	31.3%	38.3%	24.2%	378,906	5.8%	32.1%	39.5%	22.6%	377,896	6.5%	31.9%	37.9%	23.7%
All Students: School	334	0.9%	21.9%	41.6%	35.6%	335	1.8%	19.1%	47.5%	31.6%	313	2.6%	22.0%	41.2%	34.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	*	*	*	*	2	*	*	*	*	2	*	*	*	*
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	*	*	*	*	3	*	*	*	*	0	*	*	*	*
Black not Hispanic	4	*	*	*	*	6	*	*	*	*	8	*	*	*	*
Hispanic	16	*	*	*	*	13	*	*	*	*	21	0.0%	14.3%	47.6%	38.1%
White not Hispanic	307	1.0%	23.5%	42.3%	33.2%	311	1.9%	19.9%	47.6%	30.5%	282	2.8%	23.0%	40.4%	33.7%
Students with Disabilities	68	0.0%	5.9%	22.1%	72.1%	68	1.5%	1.5%	16.2%	80.9%	61	0.0%	1.6%	21.3%	77.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	233	0.4%	18.0%	41.2%	40.3%	240	0.8%	14.2%	47.1%	37.9%	220	0.9%	16.8%	42.3%	40.0%
Limited English Proficient	1	*	*	*	*	3	*	*	*	*	11	*	*	*	*

Mathematics Supplemental Data

Group	2011-12					2012-13					2013-14				
	Total Tested	Percent Advanced	Percent Proficient	Percent Basic	Percent Minimal Performance	Total Tested	Percent Advanced	Percent Proficient	Percent Basic	Percent Minimal Performance	Total Tested	Percent Advanced	Percent Proficient	Percent Basic	Percent Minimal Performance
All Students: State	379,734	11.5%	39.0%	35.6%	13.9%	378,898	11.9%	38.7%	35.6%	13.9%	377,886	12.0%	39.1%	34.6%	14.2%
All Students: School	334	4.8%	26.3%	43.4%	25.4%	335	6.9%	26.0%	43.6%	23.6%	314	9.2%	28.0%	32.5%	30.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	*	*	*	*	2	*	*	*	*	2	*	*	*	*
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	*	*	*	*	3	*	*	*	*	0	*	*	*	*
Black not Hispanic	4	*	*	*	*	6	*	*	*	*	8	*	*	*	*
Hispanic	16	*	*	*	*	13	*	*	*	*	21	4.8%	9.5%	33.3%	52.4%
White not Hispanic	307	5.2%	27.4%	43.3%	24.1%	311	7.4%	26.7%	43.1%	22.8%	283	9.9%	28.6%	32.9%	28.6%
Students with Disabilities	68	0.0%	8.8%	32.4%	58.8%	68	2.9%	5.9%	29.4%	61.8%	62	1.6%	6.5%	16.1%	75.8%
Economically Disadvantaged	233	3.0%	20.2%	48.9%	27.9%	240	3.3%	20.4%	48.3%	27.9%	221	4.5%	23.5%	36.7%	35.3%
Limited English Proficient	1	*	*	*	*	3	*	*	*	*	11	*	*	*	*

EXHIBIT C ⁴

FINAL - PUBLIC REPORT - FOR PUBLIC RELEASE



Adams-Friendship Area

District Report Card | 2013-14 | Summary

Overall Accountability Score and Rating



Meets Expectations

Overall Accountability Ratings	Score
Significantly Exceeds Expectations	83-100
Exceeds Expectations	73-82.9
Meets Expectations	63-72.9
Meets Few Expectations	53-62.9
Fails to Meet Expectations	0-52.9

Priority Areas	District Score	Max Score	State Score	Max Score
Student Achievement	53.2/100		66.4/100	
Reading Achievement	22.5/50		29.8/50	
Mathematics Achievement	30.7/50		36.7/50	
Student Growth	63.2/100		62.4/100	
Reading Growth	30.5/50		31.5/50	
Mathematics Growth	32.7/50		30.9/50	
Closing Gaps	63.4/100		66.3/100	
Reading Achievement Gaps	17.1/25		17.0/25	
Mathematics Achievement Gaps	16.2/25		16.3/25	
Graduation Rate Gaps	30.1/50		33.0/50	
On-Track and Postsecondary Readiness	82.4/100		85.3/100	
Graduation Rate	37.0/40		36.0/40	
Attendance Rate	37.1/40		37.2/40	
3rd Grade Reading Achievement	2.0/5		2.8/5	
8th Grade Mathematics Achievement	2.3/5		3.5/5	
ACT Participation and Performance	4.0/10		5.8/10	

Student Engagement Indicators

Test Participation Lowest Group Rate (goal ≥95%)
Absenteeism Rate (goal <13%)
Dropout Rate (goal <6%)

Total Deductions: 0

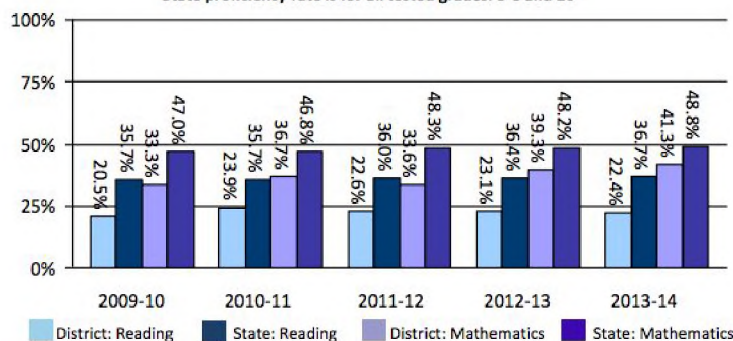
Goal met: no deduction
Goal met: no deduction
Goal met: no deduction

District Information

Grades	K4-12
Locale	Rural
Enrollment	1,636
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.2%
Black not Hispanic	2.0%
Hispanic	6.4%
White not Hispanic	90.4%
<i>Student Groups</i>	
Students with Disabilities	19.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	72.9%
Limited English Proficient	2.0%

Wisconsin Student Assessment System Percent Proficient and Advanced

Includes Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) and Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities (WAA-SwD). WKCE college and career readiness benchmarks based on National Assessment of Educational Progress. State proficiency rate is for all tested grades: 3-8 and 10



Notes: Overall Accountability Score is an average of Priority Area Scores, minus Student Engagement Indicator deductions. The average is weighted differently for districts that cannot be measured with all Priority Area Scores, to ensure that the Overall Accountability Score can be compared fairly for all districts. Accountability Ratings do not apply to Priority Area Scores. Details can be found at <http://reportcards.dpi.wi.gov/>.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction | dpi.wi.gov

Report cards for different types of schools or districts should not be directly compared.

Page
1

ENDNOTES

1. “School Report Card Technical Guide,” Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, pages 24–25, accessed May 11, 2016, <http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/accountability/pdf/School%20Report%20Card%20Technical%20Guide%202014.pdf>.
2. “Adams-Friendship Middle School Report Card Detail| 2013-14,” Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, page 4, accessed May 11, 2016, <https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/reportcards/>.
3. Ibid, 5.
4. Ibid, 1.

WYOMING



Wyoming includes high-achieving students in its growth model and reports their results separately. Its accountability system would be stronger if it rewarded schools that help students achieve at an advanced level.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ANALYSIS

The Every Student Succeeds Act grants states more authority over their school accountability systems than its predecessor, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Consequently, states now have an opportunity to design school rating systems that improve upon the NCLB model, especially when it comes to high achievers.

NCLB meant well (as did many state accountability systems that preceded it), but it had a pernicious flaw. Namely, it created strong incentives for schools to focus all their energy on helping low-performing students get over a modest “proficiency” bar, while ignoring the educational needs of their high achievers, who were likely to pass state reading and math tests regardless of what happened in the classroom. This may be why the United States has seen significant achievement growth for its lowest-performing students over the last twenty years but smaller gains for its top students.

Starting in 2011, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered waivers to states that wanted the flexibility to redesign their accountability systems. In particular, states were allowed to incorporate the use of real student growth measures into their school determinations. This was important for a variety of reasons. First, growth measures more accurately evaluate schools' impact on student achievement than proficiency rates, which are strongly correlated with student demographics, family circumstance, and prior achievement. But just as significantly, well-designed growth measures can eliminate the temptation for schools to ignore their high achievers.

ESSA maintains NCLB's requirement that states assess students annually in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as the mandate that states adopt accountability systems that lead to ratings for schools. These systems must include four types of indicators: academic achievement; another academic indicator, which can include student growth for elementary and middle schools; growth towards English proficiency for English language learners; and at least one other valid, reliable indicator of school quality or student success. Each of the academic indicators (1–3) must carry “substantial” weight and, in the aggregate, must count “much more” than the fourth.

Here we examine whether Wyoming's accountability system prioritizes high achievers. We specifically evaluate the state's system for rating school performance during the 2014-2015 school year. We do not examine the quality of Wyoming's standards, tests, or sanctions for low performance.

This analysis also illustrates how states can seize the opportunity under ESSA to redesign their accountability systems and prioritize high achievers.

This last point is especially important because many state accountability systems are currently in flux. In part, that's because of recent changes allowed by ESEA waivers, as well as the coming changes driven by ESSA implementation. But it's also because states across the country recently moved to new, tougher assessments linked to their new, tougher standards.

States may think we're being premature in evaluating their systems during this time of massive change. Please understand that our primary objective is to identify the design features of an accountability system that works for all students—which we hope will become the prevailing model now that ESEA is reauthorized and states' testing regimes are becoming stable once again.

Our focus here is on rating systems for elementary and middle schools. A separate analysis will examine the same issues for high school accountability.

HOW STATES CAN PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS IN THEIR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

In our view, states can and should take four steps to ensure that the needs of high achievers are prioritized under ESSA:

1. **For the first academic indicator required by ESSA (“academic achievement”), give schools incentives for getting more students to an “advanced” level.** Under ESSA, states will continue to track the percentage of students who attain proficiency on state tests. They should also give schools incentives for getting students to an advanced level (such as level four on Smarter Balanced or level five on PARCC). For example, they might create an achievement index that gives schools partial credit for getting students to “basic,” full credit for getting students to “proficient,” and additional credit for getting students to “advanced.” (It's not entirely clear from the Department of Education's proposed regulations whether this will be allowed, though we don't see anything in the law prohibiting it.)
2. **For the second academic indicator expected by ESSA (student growth), rate schools using a “true growth model,” i.e., one that looks at the progress of individual students at all achievement levels and not just those who are low-performing or below the “proficient” line.** Regrettably, some states still don't consider individual student growth, or else they use a “growth-to-proficiency system” that continues to encourage schools to ignore the needs of students above (or far above) the proficient level. Using true growth models—such as “value added” or the “growth percentile method”—for all students is much preferred.

3. **Include “gifted students” (or “high achieving students”) as a subgroup in the state’s accountability system and report results for them separately.** States can signal that high achievers matter by making them a visible, trackable “subgroup,” akin to special education students or English language learners, and publishing school ratings for their progress and/or achievement. (Obviously, it makes little sense to simply report that high achievers are high-achieving. But whether they are making strong growth is quite relevant. Alternatively, states might publish results for students labeled as “gifted,” though that opens up a can of worms about how that label is applied.)
4. **When determining summative school ratings, make growth—across the achievement spectrum—count the most.** Finally, the Department of Education’s proposed regulations require states to combine multiple factors into summative school ratings, probably through an index. Each of the three academic indicators (achievement, growth, and progress toward English proficiency) must carry “substantial” weight. But in our view, states should (and, under ESSA, are free to) make growth matter the most (50 percent or more of a school’s total score). Otherwise, schools will continue to face an incentive to ignore their high-performers. (States that don’t combine their indicators into a summative school rating receive a “Not Applicable” here.)

DOES WYOMING’S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PRIORITIZE HIGH ACHIEVERS?





INDICATOR	RATINGS	NOTES
1. Does the state rate schools’ “academic achievement” using a model that gives additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level?		Wyoming does not give additional credit for students achieving at an “advanced” level. ¹
2. Does the state rate schools’ growth using a model that looks at the progress of all individual students, not just those below the “proficient” line?		Wyoming uses a student growth percentile model. ² A student growth percentile model compares students to peers with similar achievement in the previous school year by ranking them based on their year-to-year growth.
3. Does the state’s accountability system include “gifted students,” “high-achieving students,” or the like as a subgroup and report their results separately?		Wyoming includes students who are “advanced” in math and/or reading as a subgroup and reports their growth results separately. (See Exhibit A.)
4. When calculating summative school ratings, does “growth for all students” count for at least half of the rating?		“Growth for all students” counts for one-third of a school’s summative rating. It is one of three factors used to evaluate schools. ³ (See Exhibits B and C.)

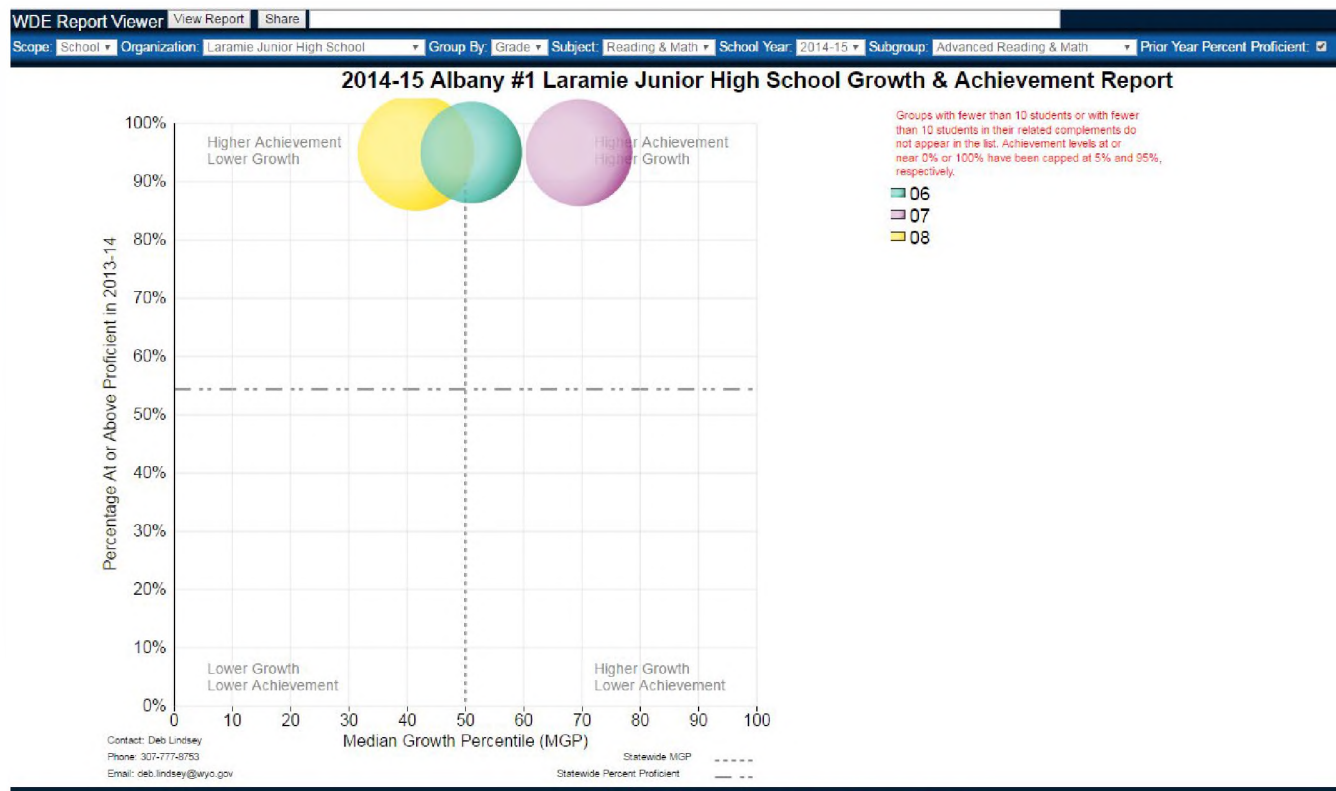
EXHIBIT A⁴

EXHIBIT B⁵

2014-15 School Performance Report For Elementary and Middle School Grades

District Name: **Albany #1**
 School Name: **Laramie Junior High School**
 Grades Served: **6-9**
 Enrollment: **858**

MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Schools in Wyoming may fall within one of four performance levels based on their pattern of performance on FOUR indicators: Achievement, Growth, Equity, and Participation Rate.

The FOUR performance levels are:

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS
 MEETING EXPECTATIONS
 PARTIALLY MEETING EXPECTATIONS
 NOT MEETING EXPECTATIONS

(For a description of the performance levels see the end of this report.)

[School Accountability Implementation Handbook](#)

[Click this link for contacts and more information about the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act \(WAEA\).](#)

School Indicator Performance

Only students enrolled at the school for a full academic year were included.
 Full Academic Year is October 1st through the midpoint of the state assessment window.

Indicator	Category	Count of Students	Description
Growth	Meeting Targets	537	Growth is a median student growth percentile (MGP) in reading and math combined for all students in grades four through eight as measured by the PAWS.
Equity	Meeting Targets	130	Equity is the median student growth percentile (MGP) in reading and math combined for a subgroup of students who had low reading and math test scores in the prior year.
Achievement	Meeting Targets	593	Achievement is the percent proficient or above on state tests in reading, mathematics, and science.
Participation Rate	Met		The participation rate requirement is 95%. The participation rate threshold is 90%. When a school's participation rate is below the requirement but at or above the threshold, the school is docked one performance level. When a school's participation rate is below the threshold the school is considered not scorable and is assigned to the not meeting expectation performance level.

EXHIBIT C ⁶

	Performance Categories and Associated Scores		
	Below Targets	Meeting Targets	Exceeding Targets
Growth	< 45	>= 45 and < 60	>= 60
Equity	< 47	>= 47 and < 60	>= 60
Achievement	< 52	>= 52 and < 69	>= 69

2015 Performance Level Descriptors for Schools with Grades 3-8**Exceeding Expectations**

Schools in this category are considered models of performance. These schools typically exceeded target in achievement and at least one other performance indicator - equity or growth – while meeting target on the other indicator.

Meeting Expectations

Schools in this category demonstrated performance that met or exceeded target on multiple performance indicators. All of these schools met or exceeded state targets in achievement. They typically met or exceeded targets on student growth and promotion of equity *or* fell below target on growth or equity while exceeding target on achievement.

Partially Meeting Expectations

Schools in this category typically performed below target on the growth and equity performance indicators *or* were below target in achievement. Many schools in this category met or exceeded state target levels in student growth *and/or* promoting equity for low-achieving students.

Not Meeting Expectations

Schools in this category had unacceptable performance on all indicators. Improvement is an urgent priority for these schools. These schools had below-target levels of achievement and student growth and showed insufficient academic improvement for low-achieving students.

ENDNOTES

1. “2015 Wyoming School Performance Rating Model Implementation Handbook,” Wyoming Department of Education, pages 2–3, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://edu.wyoming.gov/downloads/accountability/2015/implementation-handbook.pdf>.
2. Ibid, 3.
3. Ibid, 5–6.
4. “2014–15 Albany #1 Laramie Junior High School Growth & Achievement Report,” Wyoming Department of Education, accessed May 17, 2016, <https://portals.edu.wyoming.gov/Reports/Public/growth-and-achievement>.
5. “2014–15 School Performance Report For Elementary and Middle School Grades-Laramie Junior High School,” Wyoming Department of Education, accessed May 17, 2016, <https://portals.edu.wyoming.gov/Reports/Public/wde-reports-2012/public-reports/waea/2015-elem-and-middle-school-performance>.
6. Ibid.