

“Other” Indicator of School Quality or Student Success for ESSA

Rationale, Recommendations and Proposed Future Work

Overview

The ESSA Accountability Spoke Committee was convened during the fall of 2016 to gather input and research the accountability decision points in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in order to provide recommendations on those decision points for the ESSA state plan. One of the decision points was to determine what indicator Colorado would use to measure school quality or student success (referred to as an ‘other indicator’), as part of its accountability system, as required under ESSA.

An ‘other indicator’ workgroup from the Spoke Committee used survey data, feedback obtained from the listening tour and other groups, existing research, and member feedback to develop short-term and long-term recommendations. Two key considerations guided the development of options for this indicator. First, to arrive at valid and useful indicators in the long-term, much broader stakeholder input is required. Second, any indicator that is adopted should coincide with the larger goals of accountability by ensuring equity for all students and moving students towards post-secondary and workforce readiness.

This fact sheet explains the rationale and recommendations regarding the other indicator based on the work of the Accountability Spoke Committee.

Background

Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

ESSA (§1111(c)(4)(B)) specifies the indicators that each state must use in its accountability system: student achievement, student growth, English language proficiency, high school graduation rates, and an ‘other indicator’ of school quality or student success. ESSA (§1111(c)(4)(B)(v)(II)) permits the inclusion of measures such as student engagement, educator engagement, (V) student access to and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, and/or school climate and safety as the ‘other indicator’.

Statutory and regulatory requirements for the ‘other indicator’ include:

- The indicator must be valid, reliable and comparable across districts
- The indicator must be the same for all schools at each grade level (elementary, middle, high), but may vary across grade levels
- The indicator must be disaggregated by student groups
- The indicator is supported by research that high performance or improvement on such measure is likely to increase student learning

‘Other Indicator’ Recommendations

- **Short-term recommendations (for 2018 school year)**
 - Chronic Absenteeism:** use a sub-indicator that tracks changes in chronic absenteeism in schools for elementary and middle schools based on available data.
 - Post-secondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR):** use a postsecondary and workforce readiness measure already included within state accountability as permitted by ESSA. Specifically, use overall and disaggregated dropout rates as the ‘other indicator’ for high schools.
- **Long-term possibilities**
 - Convene workgroup to consider the following:
 - Climate:** School safety, parent, student and educator satisfaction, or other engagement indicators.
 - PWR:** Workforce readiness specific indicators, completion of advanced coursework, students graduating with college credit and/or industry credential, post-graduation employment.
 - Social-emotional learning (SEL):** Discussions are needed for defining SEL indicators and determining what might be appropriate for inclusion.



- The indicator must contribute to the meaningful differentiation of schools
- This indicator cannot prevent a school from being identified for comprehensive or targeted support

Guiding Principles Used by Accountability Spoke Workgroup

The ‘other indicator’ workgroup initiated their work by developing a set of guiding values to inform all subsequent decisions. In addition to considering the federal requirements, the established principles included:

- a. Multiple stakeholders’ input is needed including community, parent, principals, teachers, etc.
- b. Alignment between accountability and improvement planning is needed. In effect, the measure should be actionable and improve equity for students since these principles are central to the state’s accountability system.
- c. Should reflect an outcome not an input.
- d. Recognizes local control, needs flexibility but not absolute dictates.
- e. Need to consider short term and long term goals.
- f. Minimize burden on districts.
- g. Should be able to roll up data to the school, district, and community levels.
- h. Mindful of rural/urban differences and available resources.
- i. Avoid negative unintended consequences or disincentives.
- j. Be cognizant of innovations that may already be occurring.

Process Used to Narrow the Selection of Measures

Process

In order to arrive at a final set of recommendations the following process was used. First, the group reviewed the ESSA statute and the USDE’s proposed regulations. Next, the group considered stakeholder input gathered from the listening tour, surveys, and other individual members. The group worked to identify *additional* (in addition to ESSA requirements and accountability purpose) guiding principles for sub-indicator selection based on stakeholder input (see aforementioned guiding principles). Based on this work, the group identified three general “other” categories (school climate, postsecondary/workforce readiness, and social-emotional learning) and possible indicators that fell into each based on stakeholder input and work being piloted in schools. Next, the group determined feasibility of implementation for each indicator with pros- and cons- while selecting short-term and identifying possible long-term indicators that fall under the broader categories. The group then outlined considerations for implementing the short-term indicators and considered existing research supporting the use of selections. Lastly, the group outlined a general process for considering possible long-term indicators.

Recommendations have been vetted against the USDE’s final regulations which were recently released and will go into effect as of January 31, 2017, to ensure recommendations are in compliance.

Recommendations

The successful implementation of an ‘other indicator’ requires sufficient time, resources, and reporting infrastructure that will lead to the implementation of robust measures in both the short-term and long-term. *The initial short-term recommendations (i.e. 2018 inclusion) serves to bring forward meaningful data that is currently being collected and removes the need for additional data collection.* The long-term recommendation is for the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and education stakeholders to examine postsecondary and workforce readiness, other indicators of engagement and school climate, and social-emotional learning metrics at a deeper level to determine what and how to best address the needs of Colorado citizens. For full implementation to occur during the fall of 2018, all supporting data



would need to be collected by the next school year (2017-18). Similarly, any new measures or tools would need to be in place at that time. In order to improve the feasibility and relevance of recommendations we are anticipating a fall 2018 rollout to address short-term recommendations. This will be followed by a longer term roll-out of our long-term measures following a period of stakeholder work and tool development.

Short-term Recommendations

The short term recommendation at the elementary and middle school levels is the inclusion of an indicator of student attendance. A number of possibilities were discussed including attendance rates, reduction in truancy rates, and reductions in chronic absenteeism.

Based on both the availability and meaningfulness of the data (i.e., the data can be used by school staff to develop and implement action plans), a recommendation was made for an improvement sub-indicator that tracks changes in chronic absenteeism for elementary and middle schools. *Chronic Absenteeism*, as currently defined by CDE is, “the unduplicated count of students absent 10% or more of the days enrolled in the public school year during the school year. A student is absent if he or she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day. Chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (e.g. illness, suspension, the need to care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. This includes students in grades K-12.” These rates are currently being collected as part of the CDE School Discipline and Attendance data submission. The submission includes the reporting of the number of chronically absent students by school both overall and disaggregated by ethnicity/race, gender, special education, English language learner, and homeless status (i.e. meeting the disaggregated group requirements of ESSA).

A number of research studies have demonstrated a relationship between chronic absenteeism and a variety of learning and performance outcomes including achievement, graduation rates and dropout rates. For achievement, studies indicate that chronic absenteeism is negatively associated with proficiency rates (see Goodman, 2014; Liu & Loeb, 2016; Schanzenbach, Bauer & Mumford; 2016). Additionally, other studies indicate that chronic absenteeism is also negatively associated with graduation rates and with dropout rates (see Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Whitney, Camille, & Liu, 2016). For additional information concerning chronic absenteeism, please see:

- <http://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Chronic-Absenteeism-OP-Colorado-Childrens-Campaign-1.6.17.pdf>
- <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/What-is-Chronic-Absence.pdf>
- <https://edtrust.org/students-cant-wait/chronic-absenteeism/>

For the high school level, the group recommends to use drop-out rates for the short term. Drop-out rates are an applicable existing measure currently included within the Colorado performance frameworks. The collected dropout rates meet the requirements for the ‘other indicator’ and put no additional data collection burden on districts allowing for the immediate reporting of results. The only adjustment will be to add the disaggregated group dropout rates to the performance frameworks.

Long-term Recommendations

It is recommended that a workgroup be convened during 2017 into 2018 to consider the development and inclusion of the following options:

- For climate, possible measures include school safety, parent, student and educator satisfaction, and/or other engagement indicators.
- For postsecondary and workforce readiness, the possible development of workforce readiness specific indicators, completion of advanced coursework, students graduating with college credit/industry credential, and/or post-graduation employment will be explored.

- For social-emotional learning, discussion needs to occur to define indicators for this area and determine what might be appropriate for inclusion.

In regards to the future process for determining the components of the ‘other indicator’, it was recommended to:

- Define a theory of action for selecting and using any given indicator to support accountability goals.
- Ensure that key principles used to select the short-term indicators apply to the selection of the possible long-term indicators.
- Involve members from the Accountability Work Group (AWG) along with any other relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents) in the next set of discussions around considering the long-term possibilities for this other indicator
- Ensure that clear definitions are developed for each indicator in this new area as a means to identify better measures for evaluating each indicator.
- Ensure that a timeline and evaluation plan is defined to evaluate impact and efficacy of selected indicators relative to the theory of action.
- Review the burden of data collection and reporting.

Feedback Regarding Short- and Long- Term Recommendations

An opportunity was provided to stakeholders statewide to provide feedback concerning the initial ‘other indicator’ recommendations. A recorded webinar and survey were made available for a two-week period resulting in feedback from one hundred participants. The respondents primarily self-identified as educators (78%) and were represented roughly equally from urban, rural, and suburban areas. The survey results provide support for the suggested recommendations (see table one).

Table 1. ‘Other Indicator’ Survey Results

Item	Percent (Agree/Strongly Agree)	Count
I would support the plan to use an attendance-related metric at the elementary/middle school levels as a short-term option to meet the ‘other’ indicator requirements.	80.8%	80
Based on the three options described in the informational recording for elementary and middle schools, which option would you prefer to use in the short-term for the ‘other’ indicator?		
Improving chronic absenteeism rates	75.2%	73
Improving truancy rates	22.7%	22
Improving the lowering of mobility rates	2.1%	2
I would support the plan to use the current postsecondary and workforce readiness indicators represented in the district and high school performance frameworks as a short-term option to meet the ‘other’ indicator requirements.	83.9%	83

In addition, an open-ended item allowed for other feedback on the recommendations. In only one case did we receive more than three comments related to a specific issue/topic. For 7 of the 47 open-ended responses, it was recommended that the chronic absenteeism measure also be used at the high school level. This recommendation will be brought forward to the AWG.

Where can I learn more?

- ESSA in Colorado web-site: www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa
- For additional questions concerning the ‘other indicator’, contact Dan Jorgensen, Ph.D. via e-mail at: Jorgensen_d@cde.state.co.us