

Accountability as A Shared Responsibility

Federal Responsibility

If the People of the United States of America see the proper role of the federal government in education as ensuring equal opportunity, then the National Assessment of Educational Progress ([NAEP](#)) should continue to be used as it has been since the 1970's "to track changes in achievement of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders over time in mathematics, reading, writing, science, and other content domains."

"We can also use NAEP to examine trends in the white-black and white-Hispanic [achievement gaps](#)." Center for Education Policy Analysis

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), if returned to its [original goals and structure](#), requires "appropriate objective measures." Those accountability measures will vary. Whatever measure used to determine "educationally-deprived" students' needs is the same measure that is appropriate to use in determining progress in that area. One specific measure cannot meet the variable needs of our geographically and culturally diverse nation.

Recommendations: Improve and streamline existing reporting of results, further develop an appropriate [education indicator information system](#), and require annual reporting of the State of Education in the United States from the president. And, end the unnecessary and ineffective federal yearly testing mandate of the current ESEA called No Child Left Behind.

State Responsibility

It is primarily the states that are "responsible for the [maintenance and operation](#) of public schools." With that responsibility there should be a state accountability system in place capable of sharing with the public and policy-makers both measurable results of "outcomes" and financial accountings of adequacy and equity. State "education indicator information systems" should be developed where they are not already in place using a process that is inclusive of a variety of stakeholders capable of determining what needs measuring versus what is easily measured thus ensuring we are measuring what matters.

States can assess student achievement by using standardized achievement tests given at transition points (grade-span testing) such as 4th, 8th, 12th grades as an oversight as we did successfully in the past.

States that have identified problems in certain subject matter areas might also consider state end-of-course exams to assist in program evaluations in those subjects.

A state feedback mechanism should be established between State Departments of Education and the states' institutions of higher learning, businesses, and parents and communities.

Quality Review Teams, such as are used in many places for accreditation purposes, should be used as one more piece of oversight as part of a continuous improvement process for all schools — every 5 years, with schools that struggle to improve being provided this support every 1-2 years as needed.

Local Responsibility

Locally, a school district is responsible for hiring, firing, and evaluating all school personnel including leadership and teachers. Those evaluations are best done through a locally agreed upon method that is proven effective, fair, and tied to improvement through continuing education.

Districts also have a responsibility to be respectful and inclusive of parents and community members' opinions and requests. And, local responsibilities are really [where accountability is most important](#) because it is in the classroom that assessments and interventions are student-focused.

Student assessments include both formative and summative assessments (not always “tests”). “[Formative](#)” refers to various methods that teachers use to evaluate students comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. These assessments help teachers identify concepts students are struggling to learn or have not completely mastered. “[Summative](#)” assessments are used to evaluate what the student learned, skills they acquired, and overall academic achievement at the end of an instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year.

Teacher-created formative assessments of standards-aligned student learning objectives is what teachers and parents trusted in the past (and many still do) as the best and most useful evaluation of whether or not a student is learning what is being presented and what addition help is needed, if any.

End-of-course exams, subject specific tests, or school or district summative tests can be added to the array of assessments as deemed appropriate for addressing and monitoring any identified problem areas of instruction.

Continuous self-assessments of schools and classrooms should always include teacher reviews of their school resources, continuing education opportunities, and their assessment of how well the system has met [opportunity to learn standards](#).

LOST & FOUND

Missing from the discussion of a responsive, responsible accountability mechanism for our large and diverse nation is a way to make our collection of statistics, data, and various “indicators” of quality and equality in education easily readable for the public while being useful to policymakers in setting proper and necessary good education policies.

An education indicator information system and annual presidential report on the State of Education in America can finally give us what we have been demanding — genuine accountability.