

Douglas County School District Accountability Analysis

The Douglas School District Accountability Report for School year 1998-1999 was in compliance with both the spirit and letter of the law. It should be considered as a model for districts wishing to improve their report. A few suggestions are offered for making for report more user friendly.

A summary of the student performance and school characteristics deemed relevant to the evaluation of the district's school performance based on data submitted to the State Board of Education and LeBEAPE in Part I school reports and Part II district-wide reports.

Number of Pupils

During the 1998-99 school year, enrollment was 7,322, an increase of 20 students or less than one half of one percent over the previous year. Students attended seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools.

Student Attendance Rate

The student attendance rate was 94%, which was slightly higher than the statewide rate (93.3%) and very close to the 93.9% rate for the previous year.

Teacher Attendance Rates

The teacher attendance rate was 96%, an improvement of 2% over the previous year and was one percent higher than the statewide rate.

Dropout and Non-Promotion Rates

The dropout rate in grades nine through twelve was 4.1% representing an improvement from the previous year's rate of 5.8% and well below the statewide rate of 7.8%. Rates of non-promotion in the elementary grades (K-5) averaged about one half of one percent, and were only slightly higher in grades 6-8 where the average was 0.57%. All rates were below the statewide rate except at the second grade, which equaled the statewide rate

Truancy Rate

Truancy was reported at 1%, unchanged from 1997-98.

Transiency Rate

The transiency rate was 21%, an increase of 1% over the previous year.

Student/Teacher Ratio

The average teacher/student ratios in the elementary grades were 1:22 in kindergarten, 1:16 in first grade, 1:17 in second, 1:19 in third, 1:25 in fourth, 1:26 in fifth, and 1:25 in sixth grade.

Average class sizes at the secondary level (grades 7-12) were 20 students in English and social studies classes, and 19 in math and science classes. Class size averages were all lower for high school grades than for the middle school grades.

Student/Counselor Ratio

The report of counselor/student ratio for elementary schools ranged from 1:76 to 1:684. The middle school ratios varied from 1:303 to 1:402, and the two high schools had ratios of 1:266 and 1:365. The reported district-wide student/counselor ratio was 1:455.

Suspension/Expulsion Rate

The district reported an increase in suspension/expulsions for violence to other students, and a decrease in such disciplinary actions for violence to staff. There were 166 instances of suspensions or expulsions for violence to other students in 1998-99 as compared with 111 instances in 1997-98. Disciplinary actions for violence toward staff fell from thirteen to eight during the same period. Instances of suspensions or expulsions for possession of weapons were similar in the two years (18 in 1998-99 as compared with 17 in 1997-98). Suspensions or expulsions for distribution of controlled substances fell from four to two, but such disciplinary actions for possession of a controlled substance rose from 12 to 22. In contrast, such disciplinary actions for possession of alcohol fell from 18 to 10.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova: Fourth Grade

Terra Nova Results 4th Grade

SUBJECT	% BOTTOM QUARTER			% TOP QUARTER			AVERAGE PERCENTILE RANK		
	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
Reading	16	12	20.3	29	23	25.7	59	58	55
Language	15	18	18.5	33	24	33.1	62	55	60
Math	9	12	21.2	32	30	22.3	63	60	52
Science	14	8	16.1	27	28	24.9	59	62	56

In comparison with October of 1997 performance, slight declines were noted in reading, language, and science scores in October of 1999. The decline in mathematics was somewhat larger -- eleven percentile ranks. Scores at all but one elementary school were lower or the same in mathematics on the TerraNova. Although performance at Zephyr Cove Elementary School approached levels that would have resulted in the high achievement designation, all elementary schools were in the adequate achievement level of accountability designations. The percent of eligible fourth graders completing the TerraNova tests was reported as 99% in the district table.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova: Eighth Grade

**Terra Nova Results
8th Grade**

SUBJECT	% BOTTOM QUARTER			% TOP QUARTER			AVERAGE PERCENTILE RANK		
	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
Reading	11	15	13.2	33	32	33.2	64	60	63
Language	11	18	14.1	30	29	32.3	61	56	61
Math	11	12	12.6	39	39	37.9	67	64	65
Science	15	5	11.3	25	27	30.1	56	62	62

Negligible change was noted for eighth grade TerraNova results except for science where a six percentile rank increase was recorded from 1997 to 1999.

All middle schools were in the adequate achievement level of accountability designation. The percent of eligible eighth graders completing the TerraNova tests was reported as 99% in the district table.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova: Tenth Grade

**Terra Nova Results
10th Grade**

SUBJECT	% BOTTOM QUARTER			% TOP QUARTER			AVERAGE PERCENTILE RANK		
	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
Reading	17	12	14.2	29	33	37.6	58	65	64
Language	20	8	11.4	27	31	31.5	54	63	62
Math	18	12	11.1	35	35	40.2	60	64	68
Science	20	3	14.6	33	35	40.6	57	68	66

Performance for tenth graders demonstrated solid improvement in all subject areas from 1997 to 1999. The average gain in reading was six percentile ranks, in language and math the gain was eight percentile ranks, and science showed a nine percentile rank improvement over the reported years.

Both high schools were in the adequate achievement level of accountability designation. The percent of eligible tenth graders completing the TerraNova tests was reported as 99% in the district table.

State Mandated Test Results: Writing Exam

Writing Examination 4th and 8th Grade

MEASURED TRAIT	PERCENT PROFICIENT					
	4 TH GRADE			8 TH GRADE		
	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
Ideas	NA	NR	62.8	77.0	80.1	88.6
Organization	NA	NR	55.5	78.0	77.2	86.7
Voice	NA	NR	52.4	74.0	78.0	85.5
Conventions	NA	NR	55.9	79.0	71.1	81.5

Results for the **fourth grade** Writing Proficiency Examination were above state averages on all traits. The eighth grade performances showed strong improvement over prior years and were well above state averages. The percentages of eligible fourth and eighth graders completing the Writing Proficiency Examination were not reported at the district or school levels.

State Mandated Test Results: High School Proficiency Exam

PERCENT PASSING									% DENIED DIPLOMA		
READING			MATH			WRITING					
96-97	97-98	98-99	96-97	97-98	98-99	96-97	97-98	98-99	96-97	97-98	98-99
99.0	99.0	NR	100	99	NR	99	99	NR	NA	NA	0.2

The 1998 passing rates were not reported at the district level and were obtained from the state data tables, which showed only 0.2 being denied a diploma.

ACT/SAT Results:

ACT Results

% SENIORS TAKING ACT			ACT COMPOSITE SCORE		
1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
41	31	33.3	22.0	22.1	22.3

SAT Results

% SENIORS TAKING SAT			SAT VERBAL AVERAGE			SAT MATH AVERAGE		
96-97	97-98	98-99	96-97	97-98	98-99	96-97	97-98	98-99
32.0	35.9	27.0	516	514	526	516	515	526

The average performance on the ACT exam was 22.3 for the 33.3% as compared to 31% the previous year. This was higher than the national average of 21. Twenty-seven percent of Douglas County seniors took the SAT with a verbal average of 526 and a math average of 526. These performances, also, were higher than the national SAT averages of 505 for verbal and 512 for math, though the percentage of students taking this college entrance exam declined from the prior year.

Special Programs

At both the elementary and secondary schools, 11% of students participated in special education programs and 4% in programming for English as a Second Language. Free- and reduced-price meals were provided for 21% of students. No students were involved in migrant education programs. All elementary students took classes in art, music, physical education, and computer applications. Three percent of elementary students were in the gifted and talented program.

students were enrolled in advanced placement courses. District-wide, 39% of secondary students had foreign language instruction, and 53% took occupational education courses. A larger percentage of Whittell High students (46%) took foreign language classes than at Douglas High (32%); while more Douglas High students (46%) took occupational education classes than did Whittell High students (7%).

Teachers

Of teachers in Douglas County, 69% have bachelor's degrees and 31% hold master's degrees. Fifty percent of teachers have ten or more years of experience. Classes taught by teachers outside their areas of licensure included 4% of English and occupational education classes, 5% of mathematics classes, and 2% of social studies classes.

Technology /Computers

Four of the seven elementary schools provided Internet access in either the library or a computer lab with no classroom access in the elementary schools. One of three middle schools provided access to the Internet both in a computer lab and in classrooms. The remaining two middle schools did not provide Internet access. In contrast to the limited access in elementary and middle schools, both high schools provided Internet access in their libraries, computer labs, and classrooms. The district wide ratio of students to computers was 8.5:1 with slightly lower rates for the high school students than for students in the earlier grades an is lower than the statewide average.

Remedial College Courses (UCCSN Class Enrollments)

The Douglas County School District reported that 14% of their recent graduates enrolled in remedial courses.

Expenditures

Average per-pupil expenditure was reported as \$3,252 for instruction, \$598 for administration, \$708 for building operation, \$383 for staff support, and \$531 for student support.

Total per-pupil expenditure was \$5,472. This compares with \$3,546 for instruction, \$586 for administration, \$684 for building operation, \$225 for staff support, and \$563 for student support. Total per-pupil expenditure was \$5,472 for the previous year.

Information on revenues/resources was provided as follows: state, 42%; federal, 5.2%; local, 45.5%; and opening balances of 5.1%. Amounts of funding for remedial education were reported with a total of \$230,741.

Parent Involvement

Parent participation rates in the fall conferences were 91 to 100% for the elementary schools and 39 to 71% for secondary schools, with a district average participation rate of 72%.

- 1. Areas the School Districts' Part III Report identified as examples of exemplary achievement at the school site and/or areas of improvement in outcomes from those reported in the previous year and evidence that the areas were exemplary or improved.*

Part III of the Douglas County reports provided dense tabular school level reports, which detailed the status of the district's accountability program. Listed in these tables were identified areas' of exemplary achievement or improvement, evidence of the reported areas exemplary achievement or improvement, model programs, areas' in need of improvement, evidence of the identified deficiencies, and school improvement plans to impact the identified need areas. Most frequently mentioned were areas exemplary achievement on local, state, and national achievement measures. Evidence to support the accomplishments was based on documented improvement in test performance and improvement on test performance over previous years. Also identified were improvements in interpersonal relations, disciplinary problems, and dropout rates. Evidence to support these improvements was derived from reduced rates of disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and dropouts.

Other areas of accomplishment included restructured scheduling, which resulted in greater student accessibility to an increased array of offerings including new remedial programs. Additionally, an active and enhanced high school career-counseling program was credited with a high rate of application and acceptance in post-secondary education.

- 3. Areas the School Districts' Part III Report identified as in need of improvement at the school site(s) and evidence for any deficiencies addressed.*

The most frequently noted areas needing improvement at the elementary level were reading and language arts. At the middle school level, reading and science achievement were recognized as in need of improvement. High schools reported needs in the areas of reading, math, and science achievement. Evidence of the identified deficiencies was derived from Terra Nova scores, Nevada Writing Proficiency Examinations, High School Proficiency Examinations, and district testing programs.

4. *Summary of the School Districts' plan for improvement at the school site.*

Detailed and appropriate programming and increased attention were listed for each area in need of improvement at the school level.

5. *Sources of information to be used in determining effectiveness of the plan for improvement.*

Evidence to be used for determining the effectiveness of the plan for improvement included TerraNova scores, Nevada Writing Proficiency Examinations, High School Proficiency Examinations, and district testing programs.

6. *Missing or incomplete data.*

- Check headings for special program report (the elementary levels show some K-12 headings and the secondary levels have the same). It seemed there may be some confusion.
- Report ratios as number of students to one counselor, i.e., 10:1 rather than 30:3.
- Provide district level scores for TerraNova and other tests for prior years for at least two years.

7. *Recommendations of Panel members for improving analysis and use of accountability findings at the school level and, if applicable, at the district level.*

The Part III section for Douglas County provided a clear and concise report on the fiscal and non-fiscal impact of accountability reporting to the public. This report was followed by a dense and detailed tabular accounting of the implementation of the accountability program at each school site. It was clear that there is central leadership and coordination in the implementation of the accountability program.

As in previous reviews, the panel wishes to recognize Douglas County School District for the quality of its reporting. What is far more important to recognize is the level of integration of accountability processes into its administrative operation and curricular/instructional planning of the district. At one extreme, accountability reporting may be viewed by a school district as an obtrusive and onerous requirement that is put upon the district. Douglas County's response to the accountability stature is at the other extreme. The standing District Accountability Committee and School Accountability Committees continue to provide a focus on the constructive aspects of the process. The implementation of the accountability process and reporting by Douglas County continues to serve as a model for other districts.

The following are offered to improve the report in the future.

1. Provide clearer headings for special program report. As presented, the headings may cause confusion.
2. Report ratios as number of students to one counselor, i.e., 10:1 rather than 30:3.
3. Provide district level scores for TerraNova and other tests for prior years for at least two years.