

Washoe County School District Accountability Analysis

The Washoe County School District continues to make progress in complying with state accountability laws. The district report contains most of the required data and is comprehensive. Some building reports are concise but others continue to deal in broad generalities, which fail to use appropriate data for planning and improvement.

1. *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

In 1998-99, the Washoe County School District enrolled 52,813 students in 58 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, and 12 high schools, representing a growth rate of 3.1% from the previous school year. One new elementary school and one charter high school were opened.

Student Attendance Rate

The district-wide attendance rate was 92.9%, an increase of approximately 1% from the previous year. The attendance rate ranged from 85% to 99%, with the exception of Washoe High School, an alternative school, with a low rate of 79%. However, this was a dramatic increase from the 55% rate at Washoe High the previous year.

Teacher Attendance Rate

The district-wide daily teacher attendance rate was 95.3%, an increase of approximately 1% from the previous year's average of 94.4%. The teacher attendance rates ranged from 92.6% to 97.4%.

Dropout and Non-Promotion Rates

The district-wide high school dropout rate was 7.3%, the same rate as that of the previous year. However, this still was a significant drop in rates over during the previous four years (1993-1997).

In general, the district-wide rate of non-promotion for each grade was slightly higher than the state average except for the kindergarten and sixth grade. Percentages of students retained were 0.7% in kindergarten, 3.8% in first grade, 1.6% in second grade, 1.4% in third grade, 1.1% in fourth grade, 0.6% in fifth grade, 0.5% in sixth grade, 2.0% in seventh grade, and 1.3% in eighth grade.

Truancy Rate

The average secondary school truancy rate in 1998-1999 for the district was 7.3%, about a 2% increase from the previous year's rate of 5.5%. Middle schools reported a lower rate (2.5%) than high schools (10.1%). As was the case in the previous year, the average truancy rate for the elementary level was not reported.

Transiency Rate

The transiency rates varied widely among schools, ranging from 10% to 77%, with a district-wide average of 33%. This average rate was the same as in the previous year. Twenty-one of 58 elementary schools and six of 23 secondary schools reported transiency rates over 40%.

Student/Teacher Ratio

The average class sizes for elementary and secondary levels in 1998-1999 were similar to statewide averages, ranging, at the elementary level, from 16:1 to 26:1, and, at the secondary level, for four core subjects from 23:1 to 26:1. The number of elementary schools with the class sizes over 30 were: seven in kindergarten (5 of these were 40 or above), eight in fourth grade, seven in fifth grade, and eight in sixth grade. Class sizes of secondary classes in the four core areas ranged from 6 to 32. Pine Middle School reported the highest average class sizes, with 27 in English classes, 30 in math classes, 32 in science classes, and 31 in social studies classes.

Student/Counselor Ratio

The 1998-1999 district-wide counselor/student ratio of 1:432 was slightly lower than the 1:443 ratio in the previous year and lower than the average statewide ratio of 1:494.5 in this reporting year. The ratios at the elementary level ranged from 1:263 to 1:1326, with an average ratio of 1:762. However, 15 elementary schools reported over 1000 students per counselor. The ratio at the secondary level ranged from 1:79 to 1:356, with an average ratio of 1:295 for the middle schools and 1:252 at the high schools.

Suspension/Expulsion Rate

The 1998-1999 reported instances of suspensions or expulsions due to violence declined in general, compared to those of the prior year. In relation to the student population, instances of violence against other students in elementary schools were high in Lemmon Valley with 52 instances, Stead with 34, Desert Heights with 27, and Corbett with 24. Most of these schools reported fewer instances of violence than in the previous year.

Two of the 11 middle schools (Pine and Traner) reported having suspended, expelled, or referred to alternative or homebound education more than 10% of their students due to violence against other students. This showed a decline from the previous year when five schools reported more than 10% of students in this category. Six incidences of violence to school staff occurred in Traner. Two schools, Mendive and Pine, also reported cases involving possession of a dangerous weapon (1 incident each). Billinghurst and Sparks reported 22 and 11 incidences, respectively, of possession or use of controlled substance.

A dramatic decrease occurred in the district in suspensions or expulsions for weapon-related offenses, from 67 in the prior year, to 14 in 1998-1999. Reno High School, for example, had no incident in this category during the year, compared to five in the previous year. The district-wide number of students suspended, expelled, or referred to an alternative educational setting for possession of a dangerous weapon has declined steadily over a four-year period (from 85 to 76 to 67 to 14 instances).

Nine secondary schools reported experiencing more than 10 incidents of drug possession. Galena reported the highest number with 35 incidents. Four high schools also reported more than 10 incidents of alcohol possession. The district reported a 26% reduction in the number of incidents in which students were suspended or expelled for fighting from the prior year. Likewise, the number of instances involving dangerous weapons dropped from 68 to 14, a 79% improvement.

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 | 26.3 | 18.6 | 22.7 | 21.0 | 20.8 | 21.9 | 48 | 53 | 51 |
| Language | 26.1 | 22.0 | 20.3 | 25.9 | 24.8 | 31.2 | 50 | 52 | 57 |
| Math | 27.8 | 22.6 | 23.1 | 16.7 | 21.3 | 22.1 | 45 | 50 | 51 |
| Science | 22.1 | 11.3 | 20.7 | 22.5 | 26.8 | 23.1 | 51 | 60 | 53 |

The district-wide performance of fourth graders in Washoe County on the TerraNova tests in 1999-2000 showed improvements from the previous year in the two of the four areas measured (language and math). Achievement in reading, language, math, and science ranked at the 51st, 57th, 51st, and 53rd percentiles, respectively. Only the average math score was lower than the statewide average of the 56th percentile. The language score at the 57th percentile was a large improvement from the previous year's 52nd percentile. Over 99% of eligible fourth grade students in Washoe County took the tests, an increase of approximately 2% from the previous year.

Two schools reported major changes in the testing period in the Fall of 1999, Lenz Elementary School showed a dramatic increase in student achievement in all four areas of the TerraNova tests. Lenz had an average national percentile rank at the 76th in reading, the 86th in language, the 84th in math, and the 78th in science, with more than 50% of students scoring in the top quarter in all four areas. Loder Elementary School scored an average national percentile ranks between 20th and 30th in all four areas, with more than 50% of students scoring in the bottom quarter in the four areas.

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 | 20.6 | 16.9 | 18.5 | 29.3 | 32.0 | 30.9 | 56 | 59 | 58 |
| Language | 20.7 | 19.1 | 18.6 | 27.0 | 29.4 | 27.6 | 55 | 57 | 56 |
| Math | 31.8 | 28.3 | 26.5 | 20.9 | 23.7 | 25.1 | 45 | 48 | 50 |
| Science | 20.5 | 12.1 | 19.0 | 25.1 | 25.9 | 26.4 | 54 | 58 | 55 |

The performances of eighth graders on the fall 1999 TerraNova testing were similar to those of the previous year in all four areas. Their average percentile ranks, at the 58th percentile in reading, the 56th in language, the 50th in math, and the 55th in science were all at or above both national and state averages. Although the average percentile ranks in some subject matters were slightly lower than in the previous year (reading from 59th in 1998 to 58th in 1999; language from 57th to 56th; science from 58th to 55th), the average math score was up to the 50th percentile this year from the previous year's 48th percentile rank. More than 98% of eighth graders were reported as having taken the tests in 1999.

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 | 17.1 | 20.4 | 19.2 | 32.9 | 31.6 | 31.3 | 61 | 59 | 59 |
| Language | 15.5 | 14.1 | 17.2 | 31.0 | 31.0 | 29.6 | 59 | 61 | 58 |
| Math | 21.8 | 21.1 | 22.2 | 31.7 | 29.7 | 31.5 | 57 | 57 | 57 |
| Science | 16.4 | 7.1 | 18.2 | 35.5 | 30.3 | 33.9 | 62 | 63 | 60 |

The tenth graders' achievement scores on the fall 1999 TerraNova tests were also similar to those of the previous year, with scores at the 59th percentile in reading, the 58th percentile in language, the 57th percentile in math, and the 60th percentile in science. These average scores were well above the national and state averages. The reported percentage of tenth graders taking the test was 92.1%.

The new charter high school (ICDA) reported low performance in all areas, with the average national percentile ranks ranging from the 20th to 29th. Over 40 percent of ICDA students' scores fell in the bottom quarter except in science. ICDA also reported a remarkably high transiency rate (105%). Students at Reno High School continued to demonstrate the highest average performance among the district high schools, with scores in the 72nd percentile in reading, the 71st in language and math, and the 72nd in science. Over 40% of students at Reno and McQueen high schools scored in the top quarter in all four areas. The achievement level of the alternative school (Washoe High School) was the lowest among the district's high schools.

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 | 66.5 | 56.7 | 69.5 | 80.0 | 84.7 |
| Organization | NA | 59.8 | 51.7 | 68.6 | 74.9 | 81.0 |
| Voice | NA | 61.6 | 49.5 | 68.1 | 75.9 | 79.5 |
| Conventions | NA | 58.6 | 50.9 | 70.3 | 66.9 | 74.6 |

Average scores for the **fourth grade** writing exam in 1999-2000 were above the state average except for one area (writing conventions). Average percentages of proficiency in writing (Ideas, Organization, Voice, and Conventions) were 56.7%, 51.7%, 49.5%, and 50.9%. Average scores for the **eighth grade** writing exam were above the state average in all four categories. Percentages of proficiency ranged from 74.6% to 84.7%, showing continued improvements from the prior year in all four categories.

State Mandated Test Results: High School Proficiency Exam

High School Proficiency Examination

| 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 |
| 95.3 | 98.7 | 97.1 | 94.5 | 98.6 | 97.4 | 96.2 | 99.2 | 99.3 | NA | NA | 3.3 |

Students taking the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam in 1998-1999 averaged a passing rate of 97.1% in reading, 99.3% in writing, and 97.4% in mathematics, showing a slight decline in reading and math from the prior year and maintaining a similar level in writing. However, compared to the passing rate from the year before, these scores show that the district largely maintained a high level of performance.

ACT/SAT Results

ACT Results

| % SENIORS TAKING ACT | | | ACT COMPOSITE SCORE | | |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------------------|---------|---------|
| 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| 49 | 48 | 44 | 21.5 | 22.2 | 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 |
| 39 | 37 | 36 | 514 | 528 | 524 | 511 | 529 | 531 |

Forty-four percent of the high school seniors in the district took the ACT, and 36% took the SAT exam. Average scores were above the state average on the ACT (22.3) and on SAT verbal (524) and on SAT math (531). These scores were similar to those of the previous year. Gerlach, ICDA, and Washoe High did not report both ACT and SAT due to the small number of students having taken the tests.

A district-wide average of 15.8% of the graduating class enrolled in either a remedial mathematics or English course at UCCSN. Among the 326 Nevada high school advanced placement scholars, 101 students were from Washoe County.

Special Programs

Wide variations in enrollment in special education classes and ESL classes continued in the 1998-99 school year. Enrollment in special education classes varied from school to school: elementary schools ranged from 4.5% to 24% and secondary schools from 0% to 20.5%, with a

district-wide average of 10.7%. The proportions of students receiving instruction in English as a Second Language also varied widely, ranging from 0% to 42.6% at the elementary level and from 0% to 12.1% at the secondary level, with a district average of 8.2%. Loder Elementary School, scoring at low levels on the TerraNova test, reported higher percentages of students receiving instruction in English as a Second Language (42.6%). Loder also reported a higher percentage of students receiving free- or reduced-price meals (85.5% in comparison with the district average of 29.5%). Similar to the prior year, among the middle schools, Traner Middle School reported the highest rates of participation in both special education (20.5%) and English as a Second Language (12.1%), as well as in the free- and reduced-price meal programs (72.4%).

One hundred percent of elementary school students participated in art, music, physical education, and computer education classes. At the middle school level, average participation rates were 34% in music, 28% in art, 35% in foreign language, and 29% in athletics. At the high school level, average participation rates were 15% in music, 33% in art, 34% in foreign language, 27% in athletics, and 47% in occupational education. At the high school level, almost 14% of students participated in advanced placement courses.

An average of 3.1% of elementary students participated in gifted and talented education, with the percentages at each school ranging from 0% to 15.5%. District-wide, 0.2% of students participated in migrant education programming.

Teachers

Thirty-four percent of Washoe County teachers had more than ten years of experience. Ten percent were new teachers, 23% had taught from 1 to 3 years, 16% from 4 to 6 years, and 17% from 7 to 9 years. An average of 0% to 2.1% of the four core subjects at the secondary level were taught by teachers outside license areas, with 96% of the teachers teaching within their area of licensure. Forty-nine percent of teachers held a bachelor's degree, and 51% a master's degree.

Technology/Computers

With the exception of only one elementary school, all elementary schools and all secondary schools had access to the Internet. The student-to-computer ratio varied widely, from 2:1 to 35:1 at the elementary level where the median ratio was 13:1. The ratio varied from 3:1 to 20:1 at the secondary level with a median ratio of 8:1. These ratios were similar to those of the previous year.

Remedial College Courses (UCCSN Class Enrollments)

The Washoe County School District reported that 15.8% of their recent graduates enrolled in remedial courses.

Expenditures

At the elementary and middle school levels, per-pupil expenditures were fairly uniform, with approximately 66% spent on instruction (a district-wide average of \$3,370). At the high school level, a remote rural high school (Gerlach) reported a high of \$10,314 per-pupil costs, with \$5,596 expended on instruction. Incline and Washoe High Schools, with smaller enrollments, also reported higher per-pupil expenditures than other schools. The pattern of per-pupil expenditures was very similar to that reported in the previous year.

Parent Involvement

The district reported an overall rate of 93.6% in fall 1998 and 93% in spring 1999 in parent involvement at the elementary level, very similar to participation rates in the prior year. Activities related to parental and community involvement were highlighted in both the district and individual school reports. Parental involvement data were not provided for the secondary level because parent/teacher conferences were not scheduled at the secondary level.

2. *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.*

The Washoe County School District's Part III Report consisted of three major sections: 1998-1999 District Overview, 1998-1999 Observation-Disaggregated Test Scores, and a 1- to 3-page accountability report from individual schools in the district. The district overview summarized: (a) areas of exemplary achievement or improvement; (b) areas where improvement was needed; (c) missing data; and (d) fiscal and non-fiscal costs to comply with NRS 385.347. The second section, on disaggregated test scores, reported on the schools with transiency rates exceeding 38% in the fall 1999 TerraNova test.

The following areas of exemplary achievement were highlighted at the district level:

1. Academic achievement

Seven schools removed themselves from the state's "In Need of Improvement" category. Programs such as Reading Recovery, Success for All, and others were cited for the remarkable progress and improvement in the TerraNova test scores in these schools. In addition, some schools attributed the improvement to the adoption of a year-round calendar that provided a more continuous learning environment, or to tutors and volunteers who provided intensive one-on-one instruction.

Fourth-, eighth-, and tenth-grade TerraNova scores were summarized, and improvements from 1997 were noted in general (see section 7 for more). Mendive Middle School was highlighted for 80.5% of its students scoring a three or higher on all four traits measured by the writing examination.

The ACT and SAT college entrance exam scores continuously outpaced the national and state averages by considerable margins. The district attributed this superior performance to the fact that a greater number of high school students are enrolling in more challenging courses.

2. Safe schools

The district reported fewer incidents of violence to other students, decreasing 37.4% at elementary schools, 39.8% at middle schools, and 19% at high schools. The improvements were attributed to the institutionalized conflict resolution programs, peer mediation, and anger management programs. Many schools had made efforts to increase the number of parents and other adults on campus through, for example, the Parent Patrol program. Weapons-related offenses resulting in suspensions/expulsions dropped dramatically from 67 in the prior year to 14 in 1998-99. This steady improvement in promoting safe schools was attributed to a variety of factors, such as a climate of trust and an atmosphere wherein students felt safe to report rumors

and suspected illegal activities. Special programs such as the School Secret Witness program, "Time 2 Act" sponsored by KTVN Channel 2 and Nevada Bell, and the excellent working relationship established between the student body and the Washoe Country School District Police Department were highlighted.

3. Dropout rate

The district dropout rate held steady at 7.3% since the prior year, which was a significant decline from prior years. Although the district speculated that a more rigorous proficiency exam might lead to an increase in the dropout rate, it did not. As part of its efforts to reduce the dropout rate, the district restructured its entire Alternative Education program.

At the individual school sites, the most frequently cited areas of exemplary or improved performance were student achievement, parental involvement, school safety, use of technology, and increased attendance. The improvements were attributed to special programs such as Reading Recovery Program, Success for All, Summer Literacy Program, Accelerated Reader Program, and/or staff professional development. Some schools reported that staff development brought changes in, for example, teachers' provision of instruction in multiple formats to reach all students and in more varied activities such as problem-solving and hands-on activities. Staff development programs such as California Early Literacy Learning and Extended Literacy Learning were highlighted in some schools. Improved school safety was attributed to various behavior management programs such as Conflict Managers Program or Character Education. Increased attendance rates in various schools were attributed to new attendance plans the schools employed, Success For All attendance monitoring, and/or family support.

[Sections 3 and 4 are combined for Washoe County, because they are closely related]

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.*

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

Based on the accountability data, Part III of the district overview identified two areas in need of improvement and the plans for improvement:

1. Fourth grade Writing Proficiency exam

The district report pointed out the drop in the percentage of students proficient on all four writing traits from 39.9% of the prior year to 32.5% in 1998-1999. Many elementary schools planned staff development in writing traits analysis and planned to emphasize writing across the curriculum.

2. Truancy rates

The truancy rates at the secondary level increased to 7.3% from the previous year's 5.5%. This statistic was viewed as troublesome due to the emphasis on attendance from the schools, the work of the School Attendance Review Board, and the multiple times that local law enforcement cooperated with school police and attendance officers to conduct truancy sweeps. The district reported a need for more analysis.

The superintendent's review and progress toward goals in the accountability report indicated that the Board of Trustees re-committed the district to the six goals adopted in the prior

year as part of the district's long-range plan, and decided to focus their efforts on three of them. They are: (1) By the year 2002 each student in grade three will read at or above grade level; (2) By the year 2002 all Washoe County School District graduates will demonstrate mastery of the skills needed for entry-level positions or post-secondary education; and (3) By the year 2002 schools will be safer and more orderly by accomplishing a 50% reduction in the number of fights, destruction of property, threats, harassment, hate crimes, weapons, drugs, and gang activity

Similar to the previous year, individual schools identified areas in need of improvement, and action plans were established to improve the identified area. Some schools also established corresponding evaluation plans for their action plans, and a few schools provided the completion dates and person(s) responsible for each improvement plan. However, some schools' plans for improvement were not specific enough to help them accomplish their intended progress in need areas. Student achievement was the most often cited area as needing further improvement. Most of these schools provided specific plans to implement or expand certain programs to improve student performance on tests. Other areas in need of improvement included daily attendance, dropouts, parental involvement, student behavior management, truancy rates, and professional development. As in the previous year, some of the plans for improvement reflected district level involvement, while others included the development or adoption of strategies or specific programs appropriate to the individual school sites.

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

Some schools in the district reported both the action plans and the means to measure the effectiveness of the plan. For example, at Desert Heights Elementary School, the areas needing improvement were described, followed by the plans for improving those areas. Then evaluation plans to measure the effectiveness of the action plan were listed. For example, for increasing attendance and responding to transiency, this school listed five actions to take and then the measures of attendance records, telephone logs, documentation of written excuses, documentation of home visits, CPS reports, clinical log of medical excuses by school and doctors to examine the effectiveness of the action plan. However, many schools only identified the areas needing improvement with or without the action and evaluation plans.

6. *Missing or incomplete data.*

1. The district acknowledged that, despite serious efforts by the Information Services department, the district was unable to include truancy data from the elementary schools. The district indicated that those technical issues would be overcome and the data would be reported the following year.
2. The reported percentages of fourth graders taking the TerraNova test in Roger Corbett and Kate Smith Elementary schools were 76.4% and 87.5%, respectively. These percentages were found incorrect due to errors made at the school site in special coding. With the recalculation, students taking the test were 100% in Corbett and 96% in Kate Smith.
3. The district total enrollment reported in Part II (52,652) did not match with that of the state report (52,813).

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 three parts of Washoe County's 2000 Report provided the required accountability data and accomplishments for the 1998-99 school year. As with the last two years, the district overview of Part III was organized in such a way for readers to easily view its overall status in the required categories of the accountability report. Consistency shown throughout the presentation of individual school accountability reports in Part I was informative and reader-

friendly.

As in the prior year, the Part III report highlighted exemplary achievements or improvements and pointed out areas in need of improvement. The report reflected the efforts of district to use accountability data provided by each of the district's schools. It was evident that the accountability data have been used effectively by many of the schools in the district. One notable example was that seven of the eight schools in need of improvement in student performance removed themselves from that category. Many of these schools set up action plans for improving student achievement in the accountability report in the previous year and implemented their plans, thus resulting in higher achievement in this year than the previous year. Additional strong indicators reflecting the use of accountability data were shown in the area of school safety. The district's overall long-range goals included plans to improve school safety, and most of the schools in the district listed school safety as an important area to attend to. The dramatic reduction of violence-related incidences was the evidence of the strong commitment and collaborative efforts between the district and individual schools.

Part III of the individual school reports represented continuous improvement in their presentation and use of accountability data. As with the prior year, many schools organized the report in ways to help them clearly identify the exemplary areas and areas needing enhancement. It was apparent that many schools were utilizing the accountability report effectively in finding these areas and in planning for future actions.

Although continuous advancement was evident in making the accountability reports reader-friendly and in using accountability data at both the district and individual school levels, further considerations for improvement are needed in some schools. The following are some areas of concern:

1. While some of the district schools provided detailed improvement plans and measures of the effectiveness of the plans, others only reported general level plans that did not include actions to be taken. For example, stating "We plan to improve our sixth grade language scores ..." without specific plans for actions and evaluations, seems unlikely to help the school move forward to implementation. The panel recommends training for those persons preparing such reports.
2. Additional attention to accuracy is needed. In the Part III report, some individual schools quoted incorrect accountability data in their description of items. For example, in discussing the percentages of students scoring in the national bottom quarter in subject matter areas, one elementary school used the previous year's data.
3. Although many of the district's schools acknowledged the areas for improvement and provided action plans, other schools did not utilize the accountability data fully. In some instances, schools with low student achievement scores in all four subject areas included only plans for improvement in one or two areas. Other schools with declining student performances provided plans at only a superficial level (e.g., increase staff training in curriculum planning...; the school will adopt the ... program). These schools would benefit from more detailed action plans and evaluation approaches.

The following is suggested for recommendation #3. If increasing the TerraNova scores is one of the goals, using only the TerraNova tests as the evaluation method might not help them see the progress "toward" that goal. Other measures could help to assess student progress before they actually take the TerraNova test.

1. Although the district acknowledged that the truancy data for elementary schools were not included in this reporting year, this was the case for at least three consecutive years. It was reported in the last year that the situation had been corrected for the next year's report (i.e., the current reporting year). The district did express a belief that these data will be reported next year.

2. In general, the district's schools maintained similar achievement levels in all areas, reflecting not only a large student population but also continued efforts for improving student achievement. Mathematics scores at both fourth- and eighth-grade levels had been below the state average in prior years. While average percentile ranks for both grades slightly improved, the fourth-grade district math score (51st percentile) was still lower than the state average percentile rank (56th), and the eight-grade math (50th) was slightly over the state average (49%). That is, compared to other subject matters tested, math remained the lowest. Although math achievement scores showed some improvement from the prior year, continued district-wide efforts for improvement in mathematics achievement is needed.