

Lander County School District Accountability Analysis

The Lander County School District's 1998-99 accountability report had several deficiencies compared to what is required and to those produced by other districts. Building Part III reports were not found and there were a number on inconsistencies in the data when compared to the Statewide Data Tables. A strong recommendation is made for use of data in planning.

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.*

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Number of Pupils

The Lander County schools enrolled 1,703 students, an 8.3% decrease from the previous year's enrollment.

Student Attendance Rate

The attendance rate, district wide, increased from 94.1% to 94.4% over the previous year.

Teacher Attendance Rate

The rate of teacher attendance also made gains in the Lander County schools. In 1997-98, the attendance rate was 92.8% and the 1998-99 rate was 94.6%.

Dropout and Non-Promotion Rates

District wide, the dropout rate in Lander County was down to 4.4% compared to 7.2% for the previous year. The percentages of students retained in grade level ranged from zero in fifth grade to 10% in seventh grade.

Transiency Rate

The transiency rate across all schools in Lander County dropped from 28% to 19% for the 1998-99 school year.

Student/Teacher Ratios

Average class sizes (student/teacher) reported at the elementary level were fairly stable in

Lander County. For first grade, 1 teacher to 17 students were reported; second grade ratio, 16:1; third grade, 21:1; fourth grade, the district's highest ratio of 27:1; fifth grade, 25:1; and sixth grade 22:1. The largest change was found in kindergarten, which declined from 23:1 to 19:1 from the previous year. At the secondary level, student/teacher ratios were significantly below the state averages. Average class sizes of 15 for English, 9 for math, 11 for science, and 15 for social studies were reported.

Student/Counselor Ratio.

Consistent with the decline in district enrollment, the counselor/student ratio was reduced from 619 students per counselor in 1997-98 to 568 students per counselor in the 1998-99 school year. The highest ratio – 1:1630 – was at Pierce Elementary School.

Suspension/Expulsion rate

The most frequently reported reason for suspension or expulsion of students was violence to other students. While 44 cases were reported district-wide in 1997-98, the number was reduced to 22 for the 1998-99 school year. Particularly noteworthy was that Battle Mountain Junior High School reduced the number of incidents of violence to students from 31 in the previous year to three during the current year.

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	22	17	24.2	21	22	15.8	50	54	48
Language	14	13	20.8	28	27	18.3	57	56	49
Math	14	20	24.4	17	17	9.2	53	49	42
Science	16	8	13.8	21	23	22.8	54	59	52

Fourth grade Terra Nova scores for Lander County were reported only for LeMaire Elementary School. Due to the small size of Austin Elementary School, they were not reported as a separate program. In the area of reading, the average percentile rank declined from 54 in 1998 to 48 in the 1999 testing. TerraNova scores in language declined in average percentile rank from 56 the previous year to the 49th percentile in 1999. The average percentile rank for the fourth grade group also dropped in mathematics from 49 to 42 for the current year. Finally, the fourth grade scores in the science tests decreased from an average percentile rank of 59 to 52. It should be noted that there were inconsistencies of several average percentile ranks between the district's accountability report and the state-wide published data tables. Over 99% of eligible students were tested.

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	14	17	21.8	25	21	21.8	57	51	50
Language	9	17	11.9	26	27	28.7	62	56	57
Math	12	23	22.7	17	17	18.6	54	47	49
Science	21	9	24.5	22	15	22.4	49	54	52

Average eighth grade TerraNova test scores in reading declined over the three-year period reported. The average reading percentile ranks were 57 in 1997, 52 in 1998, and 50 in 1999. The average language and math scores also declined, dropping from the 62nd percentile in 1997, to the 57th percentile in 1999 in language and from the 55th percentile in 1997 to the 49th percentile in 1999.

Science scores for eighth grade at Battle Mountain Junior High School increased slightly, from an average percentile rank of 49 in 1997 to the 52nd percentile in 1999.

As in the fourth grade reports, there were inconsistencies between the district's accountability report scores and the state-wide published school accountability tables. Over 94% of eligible students were tested.

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	13	12.9	26	27	22.6	55	60	57
Language	12	13	14.0	10	28	26.9	51	60	57
Math	12	19	24.0	23	30	26.0	58	57	53
Science	13	3	14.4	26	20	18.6	57	61	53

The tenth grade reading scores at Battle Mountain High School on the TerraNova test continued to be above the national averages. The average percentile rank in 1997 was 55, in 1998, 60, and in 1999, 57. On the language test in tenth grade, the average percentile rank was 57, a four point drop from the previous year. In mathematics, tenth graders' average scores were at the 57th percentile in 1997 but decreased to the 53rd percentile in 1999. The science test scores dropped from the 56th percentile in 1997 to an average percentile rank of 53 in 1999. Tenth grade scores reported by the district were also inconsistent with the state-wide data tables. Over 96% of eligible students were tested.

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	71.0	70.7	80.2	79.8
Organization	NA	NR	59.7	66.7	77.6	77.8
Voice	NA	NR	60.5	63.3	76.7	64.6
Conventions	NA	NR	64.5	69.3	72.4	75.8

The percentage of **fourth graders** demonstrating proficiency on the state writing examination ranged from 71% in ideas to 59.7% in organization. **Eighth grade** writing proficiency ranged from the 79.8% in ideas to 64.6% in voice. Only one area, Voice, showed a significant change from the previous year dropping over 12 percentage points.

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			
97.1	96.0	97.2	95.1	95.1	88.2	97.0	96.9	95.6	NA	NA	8.1

On the high school proficiency examination, 97.2% of the students were successful in reading, an increase from last year's 96% success rate. Only 88.2% passed mathematics, which is the lowest success rate, reported by any district in the state. During the previous two years scores for math proficiency were at the 95% level. Writing proficiency was at the 95.6% level in Lander County in 1998-1999. Eight point one percent of the district's students were denied a diploma for examination failure. This is the highest failure rate reported in the state by any school district in 1998.

ACT/SAT Results

ACT Results

% SENIORS TAKING ACT			ACT COMPOSITE SCORE		
1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
35	52	61	20.0	20.0	20.7

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
0	0	1	NA	NA	700	NA	NA	530

While 61% of the graduating class took the ACT exam, only 1% took the SAT exam, which is, the lowest percentage reported on the state data table. During the two prior years no students participated in the SAT exam. The average ACT score for Lander County School district for 1998-1999 was 20.7. The district report contained an apparent clerical error as 1937 was reported as the average ACT score.

Special Programs

Most elementary students participated in music education in Lander County. About half the students participated in art and physical education at Pierce Elementary School, which serves kindergarten through second grade. Black Elementary and Austin Elementary Schools reported 100% participation in those areas. The new LeMaire Elementary School did not offer an art program, but had 100% participation in physical education. The only computer use reported at the elementary level, was 100% at Austin Elementary School. At the secondary level music participation ranged from 25% to 29% across Lander County's three programs. Art class participation ranged from 29% at Austin High School to 100% participation at Battle Mountain Junior High School. Participation in occupational education ranged from 48% to 59%. Twenty-seven percent of the students at Battle Mountain High School participated in foreign language classes. While 100% of Austin High School students participated in athletics, and 33% at Battle Mountain High School did so. Participation in elementary special education ranged from 6% at Black Elementary School to 29% at Austin Elementary School with a district average of 9.3%. Secondary school participation in special education was reported at 8.9%. Free- or reduced-price meals were available for 23.7% of elementary students and 13.7% of secondary students, with the highest concentration of 30.7% at LeMaire Elementary School. Enrollment in English as a Second Language programs included 2.6% participation at the elementary level and .3% participation at the secondary level.

Teachers

Lander County School District reported that 86% of the teachers had bachelor's degrees and 14% held master's degrees. While 95% of the teachers were teaching in their area of licensure, 18% of science classes are taught outside teachers' areas of license. Sixty-four percent of the teachers in Lander County had 10 or more years of experience, which is the second highest level of teacher experience reported in the state.

Technology/Computers

The student- to-computer ratio at the elementary level varied from 4:1 at Austin Elementary School to 33:1 at Black Elementary School. No computer availability was reported for Pierce Elementary School, which served students from kindergarten through second grade.

Internet access for the elementary programs was not reported for the 1998-99 school year. The student-to-computer ratios for secondary programs ranged from 4 students per computer at Austin High School to 9 students per computer at Battle Mountain Junior High School. Internet access was reported at Austin High School and not reported at the Battle Mountain and Austin elementary schools. The district-wide ratio of students to computers increased significantly over the previous year when 20 to 1 was reported. The 1998-99 ratio was reported at 9 to 1, across the district.

Remedial College Courses (UCCSN Class Enrollments)

The Lander County School District reported that 7% of their recent graduates enrolled in remedial courses.

Expenditures

Lander County School District's per-pupil expenditure for instruction averaged \$3,742 for the 1998-99 school year. This represented a moderate increase from the \$3,466 reported for the 1997-98 school year. Lander County received \$85,502 in Title I remedial education funds. With a small student population, Austin High School's per-pupil instructional expenditures were the highest in the state at \$9,555. Significant per-pupil operations cost of that rural location were \$2,043, and the district reported a total per-pupil expenditure of \$14,962 for Austin High School.

Parental Involvement

Attendance at parent/teacher conferences improved one percentage point over the previous year, with a 1998-99 rate of 87%.

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.*

Areas of exemplary achievement at the school site and areas of improvement in outcomes for Lander County are reported as follows:

- ◆ School improvement teams at the elementary level coordinating programs for the purpose of improving TerraNova scores.
- ◆ Enlistment of community volunteers to work with students one-on-one.
- ◆ After school programs providing students with homework assistance and enrichment activities.
- ◆ Initial efforts to map curriculum and bring alignment with new standards.
- ◆ Training of staff and students at the secondary level to recognize the warning signs to keep schools free from weapons and violence.

The items reported related generally to achievement and improvement in outcomes rather than any specific analysis of assessment data. A review of evidence of exemplary achievement and/or performance improvements at the school site level referred the reader to Part I of the

accountability report for test score results in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10. Model programs or activities at the site level that are believed to be responsible for areas of exemplary performance are reported as “see E above” which listed the identification of areas of exemplary achievement.

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 Lander County School District’s Part III Report does not provide an analysis of assessment data to determine specific areas in need of improvement at the school site. Rather, the report provides a discussion of the challenge of providing instruction for a broad range of student achievers. Providing for the instructional needs of the brightest students and the encouragement for low achieving students is emphasized. Finally with new standards in place, the regional professional development centers are reported as key players in addressing instructional needs. Evidence for deficiencies identified were reported as “although average percentile ranks are acceptable in almost every grade level and subject area, the number of students falling in the top percentage quarter is poorly represented except for grades 5, 6, 8, and 10 as reported by the TerraNova”.

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

The plans for each school in Lander County are highlighted in a paragraph describing the specific conditions and issues at that attendance area. Teacher training, surveys, enrollment changes, class size issues, accreditation renewal, parent communication strategies and curriculum mapping are among the issues discussed across the various schools.

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

Within each school’s individual plan for improvement, there are references to test analysis. While these are not detailed, they are considered within a context of the characteristics of each school’s population. While no assessment data is restated in Part III, there appears to be an effort to track test score trends and deliver resources appropriate to each attendance area.

6. *Missing or incomplete data.*

The Lander County School District’s accountability report provides information for most of the elements required in the accountability system for Nevada schools. Part III of the report continues to minimally comply and contain a discussion or defense of the district’s position concerning the utility of the accountability program. Inconsistencies are noted between the district’s report and the data tables provided by the State Department of Education. Some minor disparities may be due to rounding differences.

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 most important recommendation for improvement of the accountability process in Lander County would be.

1. To establish a stronger tie between the analysis of assessment data and areas in need of improvement and subsequent plans for improvement. Similar concerns have been expressed in the past and the district has reported that the lack of resources and personnel make this difficult. The use of discrete building reports, in addition to the district report, maybe helpful in addressing this challenge. The report submitted is primarily a district-wide report where building level assessment data is identified. The integration of building reports would provide an opportunity for more specific goals and objectives at each building that can be tied directly to evidence within the context of each buildings test results.
2. Attention and priority be given to the accurate and consistent data reporting in the district reports. Accurate data gives the district cliental a true picture of schools' performance. In several instances the test score data was actually higher than that reported.