

## **Mineral County School District Accountability Analysis**

The Mineral County School district accountability report contains all required items but the testing data is erroneously reported in several categories. Recommendations are made for improving the data reporting as well and focusing on improving student achievement at the elementary level.

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**

The Mineral County School District served 1,039 students during the 1998-1999 school year. This number represented a decline of 66 students (3.3%) from the previous year and continued a trend of declining enrollment within the district. The district reduced staff to deal with the consequent reduction in revenues.

### **Student Attendance Rate**

The attendance rate for 1998-99 was reported as 93.7%, the same as in the previous year. The range among schools was quite small.

### **Teacher Attendance Rate**

Teacher attendance for the 1998-99 year was 94%, up slightly from 93% in the previous year.

### **Dropout and Non-Promotion Rates**

The district reported a 1998-1999 dropout rate of 4.6% at Mineral County High School. When students attending an alternative education program were included, the district dropout rate was reported as 6.5%. A trend toward a declining dropout rate was evident.

The highest rates of non-promotion in the district were in the seventh grade where 2.95% were retained and in the eighth grade levels where 2.53% were retained in the grade.

### **Truancy Rate**

State data tables showed the district truancy rate for 1998-99 as 3.0%. The district reported the highest rate (5%) at Mineral County High School, an increase over the 1% truancy rate experienced in 1997-98.

## Transiency Rate

The district-wide transiency rate for 1998-99 was 26%; this rate was 2% lower than in the previous year. The lowest rate shown was 25% at Hawthorne Elementary, while the highest was 34% at Hawthorne Primary.

## Student / Teacher Ratios

Generally speaking, in the 1998-1999 school year, class sizes increased slightly across the district, but they still remained below state averages. Student/teacher ratios at the elementary level ranged from 13:1 for first grade, to 24:1 at fourth grade. There were some fairly wide ranges within grades that might be expected in a small, geographically dispersed district; for example, in the third grade, there was an 11:1 ratio at Schurz and an 18:1 ratio at Hawthorne. High school ratios in core subject ranged from 13:1 in eleventh grade science and twelfth grade math to 28:1 in eleventh grade English.

## Student / Counselor Ratio

The district-wide counselor/student ratio increased significantly in the 1998-99 school year, from 1:327 to 1:522. The data suggest this change was principally evident at Hawthorne Elementary School, which saw an increase from 1:221 to 1:676.

## Suspension / Expulsion Rate

The district reported 107 instances of suspension or expulsion of students during the 1998-99 school year. The largest category was violence to students (77 cases, or 72%), followed by possession or use of controlled substances (17 cases, or 16%). All of the “possession or use” disciplinary actions occurred at the high school level; the violence or fighting incidents occurred primarily at the elementary level – 41 such disciplinary actions at Hawthorne Primary and 19 at Hawthorne Elementary.

## State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova: Fourth Grade

### Terra Nova Results 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

SUBJECT	%BOTTOM QUARTER			%TOP QUARTER			AVERAGEPERCENTILE RANK		
	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
Reading	22	34	32.9	9	10	13.2	44	25	38
Language	29	40	39.5	17	12	14.5	42	33	33
Math	22	50	35.5	22	11	30.3	50	28	47
Science	22	18	34.2	16	12	13.2	46	47	36

From 1997 through 1999, the district scores at the fourth grade level were generally below state averages; there were more students in the bottom quarter and fewer in the top quarter than for the state as whole. Average achievement scores in reading were from 4

to 14 percentile ranks lower, and percentile ranks in all subject areas showed a downward trend during the three-year period. Schurz has made significant gains over the previous year but still has a high percent of students scoring in the bottom quarter. Over 98% of those eligible were tested district-wide.

**State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova: Eighth Grade**

**Terra Nova Results  
8<sup>th</sup> 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
<b>Reading</b>	29	28	34.2	29	20	23.3	50	46	43
<b>Language</b>	32	30	31.1	24	20	9.5	47	46	42
<b>Math</b>	32	40	30.1	24	11	11.0	44	36	38
<b>Science</b>	24	21	24.7	25	16	16.4	53	50	45

District scores for eighth graders showed a pattern similar to that of fourth graders. Here also, the district generally had more students at the low end and fewer at the top end; average percentile ranks were below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in 9 of 12 instances, and there was a trend of declining achievement as measured by these examinations. Again, Schurz has made significant gains over the previous year but still has a high percent of students scoring in the bottom quarter at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. One hundred percent of those eligible district-wide were tested.

**State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova: Tenth Grade**

**Terra Nova Results  
10<sup>th</sup> 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
<b>Reading</b>	25	40	26.3	11	10	21.1	45	37	52
<b>Language</b>	23	31	19.3	21	17	26.3	48	44	55
<b>Math</b>	26	29	23.7	20	10	16.9	47	37	48
<b>Science</b>	19	12	31.7	17	10	31.7	48	55	48

TerraNova scores at the tenth grade level remained generally stable in the three years reported. Scores were closer to state averages and even showed small increases from 1997 to 1999; for example, the average percentile rank in reading rose from the 45<sup>th</sup> to 52<sup>nd</sup> percentile, and language scores rose from the 48<sup>th</sup> to the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile in the same period. Over 96% of those eligible were tested.

## State Mandated Test Results: Writing Exam

### Writing Examination 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

MEASURED TRAIT	PERCENT PROFICIENT					
	4 <sup>TH</sup> GRADE			8 <sup>TH</sup> GRADE		
	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
Ideas	NA	NR	56.0	52.0	68.5	75.0
Organization	NA	NR	49.3	46.0	65.5	70.0
Voice	NA	NR	52.0	70.0	61.5	70.0
Conventions	NA	NR	50.7	66.5	61.5	70.0

Except in the area of conventions, percentages of **fourth graders** demonstrating writing proficiency in Mineral County were slightly above state averages, while eighth grade percentages of proficiency were slightly below in all four areas tested. There was substantial growth in **8<sup>th</sup> grade** proficiency during the three-year period covered in this report; for example, in the ideas section of the test, percentages of students demonstrating proficiency rose from 52% to 75%, and, in the organization section, from 46% to 70%.

## 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
95.5	95.8	100.0	98.5	97.2	100.0	95.5	98.6	100.0	NA	NA	0.0

During the 1998-99 year, all students at Mineral County High School passed all sections of the high school proficiency examination. This represented an improvement for the previous year.

## ACT / SAT Results

### ACT Results

%SENIORS TAKING ACT			ACT COMPOSITE SCORE		
1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
38	28	44	20.9	21.4	19.0

During the 1998-99 year, 44% of Mineral County seniors took the ACT; similar to the average participation rate in Nevada of 43.7%. The district average score was 19.0, compared with the state average of 21.5.

The percentage of seniors taking the SAT declined from 15% of those graduating in 1997 to 4% of 1999 graduates; generally about 30% of the seniors in Nevada take this examination. District participants generally scored about 30 point lower than the state average on the verbal section. For the three-year period covered in this report, scores on the math portion declined from 500 to 420, while at the same time the state average has increased from 509 to 517.

### **Special Programs**

District-wide 14% of students received special education services. Twenty-nine percent participated in the free- and reduced-price meal program, including 78% at Schurz Elementary. There was no gifted/talent program in the district. District data indicated an effort to expand program offerings; for example, at Hawthorne Primary, 76% of students had instruction in art, music, and computers during 1998-99, as opposed to 0% the previous year. At Hawthorne Elementary, participation in music classes increased from 5% to 31%, and in art classes from 21% to 59%. At the high school level, the percentage taking foreign language grew from 15% to 18%, and the percentage in occupational education rose from 53% to 65%. On the other hand, advanced placement offerings declined from 15% to 0%.

### **Teachers**

The percent of teachers in Mineral County with only a bachelor's degree grew from 79% to 84%, while the percentage with a master's degree dropped from 22% to 14%. The percentage of teachers working in their license area dropped slightly, from 93% to 92%; however, at secondary level, the district reported that unlicensed personnel teach 21% of English classes. The teaching staff in the district is skewed toward the high end of the seniority scale; 70% have seven or more years of experience, compared with fewer than 50% statewide.

### **Technology / Computers**

The district report showed a high availability of computers in schools. The highest ratio of computers to students was at Hawthorne Primary (1:16) and the lowest was at the high school (1:3). Each classroom was said to have a computer with access to a local area network. The Mineral County School District has made a commitment to upgrading technology at all sites. For the 1998-1999 school year all school had Internet access.

### **Remedial College Courses (UCCSN Class Enrollments)**

The Mineral County School District reported that 5.6% of their recent graduates enrolled in remedial courses.

## **Expenditures**

For the 1998-99 school year, state data tables indicated that the district spent \$4,415 on instruction, up from \$4,213 the previous year. Per-pupil costs also increased in operations (from \$73 to \$820) and student support (\$302 to \$378). Declining per-pupil expenditures were evident in the areas of staff support (from \$477 to \$118) and administration (from \$1,158 to \$1,037).

These data were not presented in the district's report.

## **Parent Involvement**

The district reported that 48% of parents attended the first conference in 1998-99, down from 57% the previous year. The high school was the only site to show an increase (from 43% to 53%). Declines were noted at Hawthorne Primary (from 80% to 61%); at Hawthorne Elementary (from 49% to 29%); and at Schurz Elementary (from 73% to 65%).

- 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 district opened a new elementary school at Schurz. It made significant efforts to improve the availability of educational technology and to improve the attractiveness of all campuses. Considerable effort has been expended on school safety planning and curriculum mapping. High school students continued to do well in extra- and co-curricular activities. All of the seniors at Mineral County High School passed the state proficiency examination.

- 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 district report acknowledged the need to improve student achievement as measured by test scores, especially at the elementary level. Schurz Elementary, which was designated as a "school in need of improvement," reported 44% of its students in the bottom quarter in mathematics on the October 1999 TerraNova test. Although this was an improvement over the 60% shown in the state data tables for this category the previous year, it indicated a continuing challenge.

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

The district and each school presented general plans for improvement. In many cases, the objectives were not at a level of specificity that facilitates easy measurement. For example, the high school report stated that "classroom learning climates will be monitored and assistance will be given to teachers as needed;" the Schurz Elementary plan noted that "parent membership will be encouraged in parent organizations, advisory groups and in the classroom." It might be expected that the state timeline for reporting would permit more precision about plans already being implemented for the 1999-2000 school year.

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

The district report relied on scores on state-mandated examinations, attendance rates, fiscal information, etc. The report indicated a good faith effort to comply with the requirements for public school accountability.

- 6. Missing or incomplete data.*

There were a number of instances in which the district report presented information that was inconsistent with that available in the state data tables. The district showed enrollment for 1998-99 as 1,044, while the state showed it as 1,039. The district report of its 1998-99 expenditures appeared to be quite inaccurate; per-pupil expenditures were shown as only \$89

and total per pupil cost at \$1,766. The percentage of teachers with bachelor's degrees was shown as 54% rather than 84%. The average SAT score in math at Mineral County High School was shown in the district report both as 420 and 520.

TerraNova scores as presented by the district do not always correspond with those available from the state. See below for examples from fourth grade data:

	Area	% Bottom Quarter			% Top Quarter			Average Percentile Rank		
		Oct 97	Oct. 98	Oct. 99	Oct. 97	Oct. 98	Oct. 99	Oct. 97	Oct. 98	Oct. 99
State	Math	22	50	36	22	11	30	50	28	47
MCS D	Math	24	55	36	15	13	30	49	28	47
State	Lang.	29	40	39	17	12	14	42	33	33
MCS D	Lang.	25	40	40	16	12	15	45	33	33

Since some of these inaccuracies do not appear to be designed to show the district in a better light, they may have been the result of carelessness rather than of calculation.

7. *Recommendations of Panel members for improving analysis and use of accountability findings at the school level and, if applicable, at the district level.*
  1. Elementary student achievement as measured by test scores continued to be low. The district needs to develop clear, measurable objectives to improve student learning in these foundational grades.
  2. Parent involvement at both the primary and secondary levels remains a concern. The district might check with others where secondary schools have been more successful in attracting parents to school events focused on academic programs.
  3. The district's data in its report were not always as accurate as might be hoped. Since goals and objectives will be driven by these data, they should be carefully reviewed internally as part of the district's plan for improvement.
  4. As noted in last year's recommendations, the district should strive to develop improvement plans with clear, measurable objectives.