

Pershing County School District Accountability Analysis

Near the end of April, 2000, an "Adjusted Information to the 1998-99 Report" was issued which corrected test results and added a course listing for the high school to the original Accountability Report of the Pershing County School District. TerraNova test scores for the two elementary schools were disaggregated in that supplemental report. All other data for the elementary schools were combined and reported as one throughout the report.

The Pershing County School district has made progress in its accountability reports over the past three years but need to continue this focus as several items were omitted. Several recommendations are made for improving future reports.

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 Pershing County School District enrolled 999 students in 1998-99, reflecting a drop in enrollment of 1.4%. These students attended two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school.

Student Attendance Rate

The district-wide average daily attendance rate in 1998-1999 was 92.8%, essentially the same as the previous year. The elementary school attendance rate was 94% while at the middle school it was 93% and the high school 90%.

Teacher Attendance Rate

The average teacher attendance rate in 1998-1999 was 95.5%, with a low of 93.2% at the elementary schools and a high of 96% at Pershing County High School. On a district-wide basis, the daily attendance of teachers was slightly better than teachers statewide.

Dropout and Non-Promotion Rates

No dropouts were reported at any level in Pershing County School District in 1998-99. This compared with a 7.8% dropout rate for all schools statewide.

No data on non-promotion of students at the various grade levels were contained in the district's reports.

Truancy Rate

The truancy rate in 1998-99 was 6% across the district, making it the third highest in the state according to the *School Accountability Data Tables* for 1998-99. Predictably the highest truancy rate within the district was at the high school where a 10% rate of truancy was reported.

Transiency Rate

The district-wide transiency rate was 20.5%, down 6.5% from the year before. This district's transiency rate was 12% below the statewide average.

Student/Teacher Ratios

The average class size in the elementary schools was 16:1 for the first and second grades, 18:1 for the third grade, and 24:1 in the fourth and fifth grades. Secondary class sizes in the core subjects averaged about 20:1 but varied from 8:1 in tenth grade social studies classes to 25:1 in ninth grade mathematics.

Student/Counselor Ratios

The counselor to student ratio on a district-wide basis was 1:318, which represented a more favorable figure than in the previous year and was considerably better than the state ratio of 1:494.5. The Pershing ratio ranged from 1:225 at the middle school through 1:261 at the high school to 1:467 at the elementary schools.

Suspension/Expulsion Rates

Forty-five suspensions or expulsions were reported, with 39 of those listed as violence between students. This was a slight increase over the previous year. Of the instances of violence between students, 32 occurred at Pershing County Middle School, an increase of 17 over the previous year. An explanation was offered in the District Accountability Report: "a change in principals has occurred at the middle school and the methods and descriptions used to classify incidents may have changed." The number of such incidents at Pershing County High School was reduced from 18 the year before to seven in 1998-99. The six instances of possession of controlled substances were at the high school. There were no violence to staff cases reported anywhere in the district.

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	25	19	29.5	7	12	11.5	37	48	44
Language	31	25	31.1	6	11	9.8	36	43	39
Math	44	43	32.3	3	8	3.2	32	34	34
Science	33	11	21.0	6	15	11.3	41	52	44

All fourth grade students were either tested or exempt because of their Individual Education Plan. On the TerraNova, the average scores for Pershing County fourth graders in 1999 were at the 44th percentile in reading, the 39th percentile in language, the 34th percentile in mathematics, and the 44th percentile in science. The two elementary schools in the district, performed at very different levels. Lovelock Elementary School students attained close to average percentile ranks scores of 48 in reading, 45 in language, 38 in math and 48 in science. The performance of fourth graders at Imlay Elementary School was much less favorable. The average percentile ranks of scores for Imlay fourth graders were 24 in reading, 14 in language, 17 in math, and 24 in science. At Imlay Elementary School the percentages of students scoring in the bottom quarter of national norms was 70% in both reading and language, 60% in mathematics and 50% in science. This caused Imlay Elementary School to be cited by the State Department as a "Low Performing School" and qualified the school for special state funding for the 1999-2000 school year in order to improve student performance. Overall, scores have fluctuated over three-year period but there has not been much change. Over 98% of those students eligible 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	23	32	24.1	17	22	24.1	49	44	49
Language	20	32	25.3	24	22	16.5	52	44	45
Math	30	42	38.0	2	5	5.1	34	32	34
Science	21	14	26.6	11	19	22.8	47	53	45

On the eighth grade TerraNova tests, Pershing County students performed closer to the national norms except in math. Their average reading scores were at the 49th percentile, their language scores at the 45th percentile, math at the 34th, and science at the 45th percentile. In mathematics, 5% of Pershing students were in the top quarter of national norms and 38% were in the lowest quarter. As was the case with fourth graders, there has been some fluctuation over the

three year period but little true change. All eighth grade pupils who were eligible took the TerraNova tests in the fall of 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	8	19	27.6	25	17	20.7	62	49	47
Language	10	17	22.4	29	14	20.7	63	48	51
Math	19	28	24.1	16	9	12.1	51	40	41
Science	4	11	20.7	28	19	22.4	64	55	52

TerraNova assessments of tenth graders in 1999 showed average percentile rank performances of 47th in reading, 51st in language, 41st in math and 52nd in science. Only 12% of Pershing tenth graders students ranked in the top quarter in math this year; otherwise the distribution of scores in the top and bottom quarters roughly approximated national patterns in all areas. The scores have gone down over the three-year period. Over 98% of the eligible students were tested.

State Mandated Test Results: Writing Examinations

**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	32.2	63.3	69.7	85.3
Organization	NA	NR	32.2	62.8	59.1	81.3
Voice	NA	NR	33.9	59.8	53.0	69.3
Conventions	NA	NR	33.9	67.3	57.6	73.3

Fourth Grade: On the fourth grade writing examination percentages of students demonstrating proficiency were 32.2 % in both Ideas and Organization and 33.9% in Voice and Conventions in 1999. This data was not included in the district report.

Eighth Grade: On the eighth grade writing examination, much larger percentages of students demonstrated proficiency: 85% in Ideas, 81% in Organization, 69% in Voice, and 73% in Conventions in 1999. The proficiency rates were considerably higher than in the previous year in each area, surpassing the previous marks from between 15% to 21%. They exceeded statewide averages in Ideas and Organization by approximately six percentage points each, and were six percentage points lower in Voice.

State Mandated Test Results: High School Proficiency Examination

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
100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.0	100.0	100.0	NA	NA	0.0

All senior students in the Pershing County School District passed the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination. Therefore no student was prevented from graduating because of performance on this exam.

ACT/SAT Results

ACT Results

% SENIORS TAKING ACT			ACT COMPOSITE SCORE		
1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
56	76	71	21	19.6	19.1

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
6	2	4	598	580	425	545	550	460

Of those eligible, 71% took the ACT with an average score of 19.1 for the district, which was lower than the two previous years. Only 4% took the SATs. They attained an average score of 425 on the verbal portion and 460 on the math portion. (A cautionary note that low numbers taking any exam makes year to year comparisons problematic.) All these college entrance examination scores were below state and national averages.

Special Programs

Participation in special programs in 1998-199 included 18.1% of students participating in special education. At the elementary level, 23% participated, in the middle school 20%, and at the high school, 12%. In response to a question raised in last year's Accountability Analysis, assurances were provided by Pershing County School District that special education students were being meticulously screened and all I.D.E.A. regulations were being adhered to in a careful fashion. No students were enrolled in classes for English as a Second Language, student

parenting, or Advanced Placement. Only 1% were enrolled in migrant education and in gifted and talented programming. Forty-two percent of all Pershing pupils qualified for free- or reduced-price meals. This represented an increase of 8% over 1997-98. At the elementary level, 92% enrolled in art, 94% participated in music, 76% were in computer education, and 97% were in physical education. The latter category showed the most change, being up 13%.

At the middle school, 1998-1999 participation figures received attention because wide fluctuations from the year before. Thirty-two percent were enrolled in art classes (up 12%), 14% in music (down 22%), 58% in athletics (up 3%), 54% in occupational education (up 16%), and foreign language 0%, (down from 28%). The high school reported 44% of its students involved in art, 25% in music, 61% in athletics, a strong 79% in occupational education, and 9% in foreign language.

Teachers

Of Pershing County teachers, 88.5% had earned bachelor's degrees and the remaining 11.5% master's degrees. This highly-experienced staff included 42% having taught for ten years or more, another 18% for 7 to 9 years, and 15% for 4 to 6 years. Only 6% were new teachers. None of the teachers were assigned outside their license or endorsement areas at any level of instruction.

Technology/Computers

Student access to technology was increased. At the high school multi-media center, computers loaded with multiple programs and online connections provided research support in every discipline. Professional development helped teachers to become more technology-proficient to include technology in student assignments and tasks. The technology center hosted students throughout the day. A wide array of technological resources was used in the delivery of the secondary curriculum. No ratios of computers to students were reported at either the elementary or secondary level.

Remedial College Courses (UCCSN Class Enrollments)

The Pershing County School District did not report this number.

Expenditures

The average per-pupil expenditure included \$5,133 for instruction, \$843 for administration, \$1,170 for operations, \$446 for staff support, and \$583 for student support. These figures represented increases in every category from the previous year.

The sources of revenue were 52% from state funds, 26% from local funds, 6% from federal funds, and 16% from opening balances. Both Part I and Part III of the district's accountability report included comments anticipating reduced funding. However, the fiscal health of Pershing County School District this year appears to be strong.

Parent Involvement

Parental involvement as reflected in attendance at initial parent/guardian and teacher conferences was reported as 93% in the elementary schools, an improvement of 14% over the previous year. At the middle school this rate was 44% (up 7%). Nineteen percent of high school parents or guardians attended the initial conference. Parents were also involved in other ways. Each school hosted an active site council consisting of teaching staff, parents, community members, and, in some instances, students. These councils addressed issues of program needs, curriculum improvement, students performance, and program delivery. Plans were underway to create an advisory council at the district level that would mirror the roles and functions of these site councils.

- 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.*

In its Part III Report, the district cited several examples of exemplary and/or improved achievement including the following:

The success of the site councils involving parents, teachers and community representatives in program planning, student achievement strategies and curriculum revision at each school site - and the plans to extend this concept to the district level.

Demonstration of excellence in the History Day competitions. Two eighth graders received the "Best of State" award at the National History Day competition in Baltimore, MD, for a dramatic presentation tracing the evolution of human flight from Leonardo da Vinci to the stealth bomber. (Approximately 60% of the Nevada representatives at that competition were from Pershing County Middle School.)

The middle school Super Saturdays program consisting of a series of all-day, hands-on academic fun events in science, math and language arts. About sixty students, ten teachers, and many parent volunteers participated in these events.

The significant increase in access to technology at the high school. Increased availability of hardware, additional software programs, increased online connections and research support impacted every discipline, including vocational as well as in academic core courses. The availability of a multi-media center and the provision of a wide array of technology resources assisted in this effort.

All seniors passed all sections of the Nevada State High School Proficiency Examinations.

The district decreased the incidence of student dropouts at all grades to zero this past year.

Accounting for or contributing to these exemplary achievements, the district cited block scheduling, increased use of technology, and a supportive school-community climate including the proactive site councils that operated at each school site.

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.*

Pershing County High School identified the following areas as in need of improvement: increasing student enrollment in technology courses, increasing scores on the TerraNova exams, especially in math but with more balanced achievement and a smaller proportions of scores in the lowest quarter in all four areas; and creating more and better upper division class offerings.

The middle school expressed a need to improve instruction in mathematics and raise the level of student motivation in general.

At the elementary level, the most apparent needs were in the area of improving student achievement, especially as reflected in TerraNova test results.

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

A plan for improvement was devised for each school.

Pershing County High School planned to increase course offerings, add an additional one-half credit course in math, and maintain a 100% passing rate for all seniors on the High School Proficiency Examination.

In Pershing County Middle School, the staff planned to emphasize implementation of a standards-based curriculum, including commercial programs, Accelerated Math, and Star. They planned to restructure the school day to provide times for tutorial assistance to students both during the day and during after-school hours. Specific efforts were planned to improve the attitude of students toward school, increase their academic commitments, and provide incentives for academic achievement. They also planned to study school-to-work activities with an eye toward possible implementation.

At the elementary level, the district planned to increase the number of training sessions for staff on technology, to better train teachers in the effective applications of Accelerated Math and Accelerated Reader programs and to expand remedial assistance via Reading Recovery in the primary grades. Special events were planned to encourage even more parental participation such as principal's breakfasts, book fairs, and other activities. Improvements at Imlay Elementary School were to include studying and addressing behavior and discipline problems and issues. A complete review of the technological capacity, equipment, and operational quality was also planned for Imlay, with the possibility of providing a FAX machine, Internet connection, scanners and computers.

The district planned to secure and appoint a fully licensed, registered nurse as district health coordinator. The district was serving six, severely disabled, non-ambulatory students with high-risk medical conditions. This coordinator would serve as the site medical consultant, the safety coordinator, the health care program facilitator, and health care compliance officer.

The district also planned to set up a district-wide Master Planning Team, an extrapolation of the site councils. It was expected that this group would take on an array of responsibilities and activities designed to improve the school district, gauge its health, and assist the district's policy makers by providing reviews of current and longitudinal data. It would also plan and deliver support for key staff from each school site who would begin training in curriculum mapping and standards-based instruction so that every curricular offering in the district could be mapped, evaluated, coordinated, and articulated throughout the district within the next five years.

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

Internal data from the work of the site councils and from current and previous studies, both cross-sectional and longitudinal will be employed. The surveys identified and/or designated by the new Master Planning Team as necessary for the various analyses and assessments are intended to yield data useful in the process of future planning. Also, the Pershing County School District will continue to use all aspects of the assessment tools of the accountability system of Nevada.

6. *Missing or incomplete data.*

The number of recent high school graduates who enrolled in remedial college courses was not provided.

No percentages of students retained were provided for the elementary grades.

No student /computer ratios were provided.

The title of the Part III section of the District Accountability Report was labeled as being 1997-98 instead of 1998-99.

Appropriate and needed modifications in the narrative portion of the District Accountability Report did not accompany the revisions to the TerraNova test results that were submitted in the latter part of April, 2000. This made it awkward to evaluate the report at times.

The results of administration of the newly required 4th Grade Writing Examination were not provided.

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

While the district's reports have improved each year, particularly Part III, the district needs to be even more meticulous in processing and reporting data. Improvements have been made in the linkage of performance evidence to the planning activities of the district, but further progress is still needed. Because improvement plans were combined for the two elementary schools, it was unclear what specific academic improvements were planned for Imlay School. The relationship between plans and specific academic needs was likewise unclear, since the

plans for Imlay appeared to focus primarily on behavior and technology rather than academic skills.

1. It would help the reviewers if the pages of the District Accountability Report were numbered in the future.
2. The district appeared to be taking the accountability system of the state seriously and involving itself in data-based decision making. The extension of the role and function of site councils to the district level seems likely to assist in these processes.