

Pershing County School District Accountability Analysis

The Pershing County School District accountability report continues to improve each year. This district is to be commended for the low percentage of students requiring remedial classes in the UCCSN. Several suggestions are made for improving future reports and for compliance with state and federal accountability requirements.

- 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 official State Data Tables showed a total of 963 pupils enrolled in Pershing County School District (PCSD) schools in 1999-2000, a decrease in enrollment of 2.2% from the previous year.

Student Attendance Rate

The average daily attendance rate by students was 92.1%, essentially the same as the previous year. The elementary attendance rate was 94%, while at the middle school it was 89% and the high school 92%.

Teacher Attendance Rate

The average teacher attendance rate was 92.7%, with a low of 92% at the elementary schools and a high of 94% at Pershing County High School. On a district-wide basis, the daily attendance of teachers was slightly below that of teachers statewide.

Dropout and Non-Promotion Rates

There were no data on dropout rates in 1999-2000 provided in either the district report or the state data tables (NOTE: Per the district, data on dropout rates will be made current in the 2000-2001 accountability report). The rates on non-promotion as reported in the District Report showed no non-promotion in grades 1, 4, and 5; 1.2% in grade 2; and 1.3% in grade 3 for the Lovelock/Imlay Elementary Schools. The non-promotion rates for Pershing County Middle School were 5% in Grade 5, 1% in Grade 6 and 4% in Grade 7. These numbers were not consistent with those reported in the State Data Tables. Pershing County did not report the percent of ninth graders earning too few credits to be promoted to grade 10.

High School Completion Indicators

According to the State Data Tables, 100% of Pershing County HS graduates in 1999-2000 were awarded advanced or standard diplomas. The District Accountability Report stated there were 54 graduates.

Transiency Rate

The district-wide transiency rate was 21.8%, up slightly from the year before. The state data tables reported a low of 18% at Pershing County Middle School and a high of 25% at Pershing County High School.

Student/Teacher Ratios

Student-to-teacher ratios in the elementary schools were 13:1 in kindergarten and first grade, 17:1 in second grade, 16:1 in third grade, 23:1 in fourth grade and 26:1 in fifth grade. Class sizes at the middle school were the same for all four core classes – 25 in grades six and seven and 28 in grade 8. At Pershing County High School, average core class sizes ranged from 17:1 in math and science classes to 22:1 in English classes.

Student/Counselor Ratios

The student-to-counselor ratio on a district-wide basis was 321:1, about the same as in the previous year. The ratio ranged from 238:1 in the middle school through 258:1 in the high school to 469:1 in the elementary schools. These ratios were considerably more favorable than the average state ratio of 534:1.

Suspension/Expulsion Rates

During the 1999-2000 school year there were 53 suspensions or expulsions. Forty-four of these were for violence between students, which was up 21% from the previous year. Of the cases of violence between students, 31 occurred at Pershing County Middle School, about the same as in the year before. The number of such cases at Pershing County High School increased to 13 from 7 in 1998-99. For the first time, there were three incidents of this type reported in the elementary schools.

Number of Habitual Disciplinary Problem Students

Two expulsions for habitual disciplinary problems were reported, both from Pershing County Middle School.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova, Fourth Grade

**TerraNova Results
Fourth Grade**

SUBJECT	% BOTTOM QUARTER			% TOP QUARTER			AVERAGE PERCENTILE RANK		
	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01
Reading	19	29.5	19.7	12	11.5	10.6	48	44	48
Language	25	31.1	30.3	11	9.8	21.2	43	39	44
Math	43	32.3	30.8	8	3.2	15.4	34	34	45
Science	11	21.0	16.7	15	11.3	16.7	52	44	50

In fourth grade, 96.8 of the eligible students were tested in the fall of 2000. Fourth grade scores were higher than the year before in all four areas tested. Pershing students scored at the 48th percentile rank in reading, the 44th in language, the 45th in mathematics, and the 50th in science on national norms. The proportion of students scoring in the top quarter on national norms was 10.6% in reading, 21.2% in language, 15.4% in math and 16.7% in science. When compared to national student performance at this grade level, the proportion that placed in the bottom quarter was 19.7% in reading, 30.3% in language, 30.8 % in math and 16.7% in science. Grade 4 students in Pershing County slightly exceeded average state performance in science but fell short in the other three areas.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova, Eighth Grade

**TerraNova Results
Eighth Grade**

	% BOTTOM QUARTER			% TOP QUARTER			AVERAGE PERCENTILE RANK		
	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01
Reading	32	24.1	15.9	22	24.1	25.4	44	49	58
Language	32	25.3	14.3	22	16.5	33.3	44	45	61
Math	42	38.0	22.6	5	5.1	16.1	32	34	48
Science	14	26.6	17.7	19	22.8	27.4	53	45	58

At Grade 8, TerraNova test results showed Pershing County students attained an average reading score at the 58th percentile, language at the 61st percentile, math at the 48th percentile, and science at the 58th percentile. These rankings were up in all four areas over the previous year. Of all grade 8 students who were eligible, 98.4% took the tests in the fall of 2000. Of the four rankings, only math scores failed to show a higher proportion of grade 8 students in the top quarter than the bottom quarter on national norms. The 33.3% of eighth graders who scored in the top quarter in science is commendable. The average achievement of Pershing County eighth graders in reading, language and science

was from seven to ten percentile ranks above state averages, while their math performance was below the state average.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova, Tenth Grade

**TerraNova Results
Tenth Grade**

SUBJECT	% BOTTOM QUARTER			% TOP QUARTER			AVERAGE PERCENTILE RANK		
	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01
Reading	19	27.6	14.0	17	20.7	24.0	49	47	55
Language	17	22.4	8.0	14	20.7	20.0	48	51	57
Math	28	24.1	24.0	9	12.1	10.0	40	41	44
Science	11	20.7	17.6	19	22.4	29.4	55	52	58

TerraNova assessments of district tenth graders in the fall of 2000 showed average percentile ranks at the 55th in reading, the 57th in language, the 44th in math, and the 58th in science. All these averages exceeded the performance of the previous year. While nearly 30% of these tenth graders ranked in the top quarter of students nationally in science, the other areas showed less than 25% in the top quarter compared to national norms and only 10% of Pershing County tenth graders ranked in the top quarter in math. The distribution of scores in the bottom quarter were 14% in reading, 8% in language, 24% in math, and 17.6% in science. Pershing County tenth graders scored similar to others in Nevada in all areas except math, where their average was 16 percentile ranks lower than the state average. Pershing county tested 96.2% of those 10th grade students eligible.

State Mandated Test Results: Writing Examinations

**Writing Examinations
4th and 8th Grade**

MEASURED TRAIT	PERCENT PROFICIENT					
	4 TH GRADE			8 TH GRADE		
	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01
Ideas	NR	32.2	53.6	69.7	85.3	85.3
Organization	NR	32.2	58.0	59.1	81.3	76.5
Voice	NR	33.9	39.1	53.0	69.3	66.2
Conventions	NR	33.9	52.2	57.6	73.3	69.1

Fourth Grade: The scores on the Fourth Grade Writing Examinations showed that 53.6% of the fourth graders in Pershing County were proficient in Ideas, 58% in Organization, 39.1% in Voice, and 52.2% in Conventions. These were comparable to

state averages in Ideas and Conventions and 6% below in Organization and Voice. There was no report of the composite proficiency rating when all four scores were taken together. A much higher proportion of fourth graders were proficient in Ideas and in Organization and a somewhat higher proportion showed proficiency in Voice than in the previous year.

Eighth Grade: On the Eighth Grade Writing Examination, the percent of eighth grade students who reached proficiency was 85.3% in Ideas, 76.5% in Organization, 66.2% in Voice and 69.1% in Conventions. Although no results were reported in the district's 1999-2000 accountability report for proficiency when all four scores were taken together, the district has since indicated that the percent is 55.9%. The percentages of Pershing eighth graders demonstrating writing proficiency were above state averages in Ideas and Organization, the same in Conventions, and below state averages in Voice. The rates were identical to the year before in Ideas but slipped slightly in the other three areas.

State Mandated Test Results: High School Proficiency Examination (HPSE)

High School Proficiency Examination									% DID NOT EARN DIPLOMA		
PERCENT PASSING											
READING			MATH			WRITING					
97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	NA	0.0	0.0

The performance of senior students in the Pershing County School District on the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) was outstanding as 100% of the students attained a passing score on the three areas, reading, mathematics, and writing. Therefore, no Pershing High student was prevented from graduating because of low scores on the HSPE.

ACT/SAT Results

% SENIORS TAKING ACT			ACT COMPOSITE SCORE		
97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
76	71	71	19.6	19.1	20.3

Seventy-one percent of seniors at Pershing County High School took the ACT, the same as in the prior year. They attained an average score of 20.3, an increase of 1.2 points. The state average ACT score was 21.5, but only 40.2% of students across the state took the ACT. Pershing's participation rate on the ACT was the highest in the state.

SAT Results

% SENIORS TAKING SAT			SAT VERBAL AVERAGE			SAT MATH AVERAGE		
97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
2	4	17	580	425	520	550	460	496

The 17% of Pershing County seniors that took the SAT represented a four-fold increase over the year before. The average score attained was 520 on the verbal portion and 496 on the math portion. Both of these were impressive increases over the previous year. The statewide participation rate on the SAT was 34%. The average verbal score for Pershing seniors exceeded the state average of 510, but their math score was lower than the state average of 517.

Special Programs

Special education programs in Pershing County schools enrolled 18.7% of students district-wide. By level, 20% of elementary students, 22% of middle school students and 15% of high school students were involved in special education programming.

Forty-two percent of all PCSD elementary pupils qualified for free or reduced price meals, about the same as in the previous year. There were no elementary school students in English as a Second Language (ESL) but 6% were in migrant education in 1999-2000. No elementary school students were in after school care and less than 1% participated in gifted and talented classes, all close to the participation rates the year before. At the elementary level, 95% enrolled in art, 100% participated in music, 82% in computer education, and 91% participated in physical education. Each of these represented an increase except for physical education enrollment, where the rate decreased by 6% after a large increase the year before.

At the middle school, the participation rates appeared to be stable compared to the previous year in most areas with 2% in ESL, 3% in gifted, none in migrant education, 34% in art, 9% in music, and none in foreign language. However, the 35% participation rate in athletics was a drop of 23 percentage points and the 73% participation in occupational education was an increase of 19 percentage points.

The high school reported 2% enrolled in ESL, none in migrant education, gifted or advanced placement, all identical percentages to the year before. Forty-four percent of high school students took art (up 1%), 34% took music (up 9%), 66% were in athletics (up 5%), 9% were again in foreign language classes, and 75% were enrolled in occupational education. The display of the secondary curriculum shows a comprehensive and appropriate array of offerings, especially for a rural school district.

Teachers

An inspection of the data on teachers in Pershing County School District shows that 84.1% hold bachelor's degrees and the remaining 15.9% hold master's degrees. About half (49.2%) had taught for more than ten years while another 46.1% had taught for from 3 to 10 years and only 4.8% were new or had taught less than three years. The teaching staff could be characterized as a seasoned group. None of the teachers were assigned outside their license or endorsement areas in the core areas of English, math, science or social studies and district-wide 96.6% of the teachers taught in their licensed areas.

Technology/Computers

The district-wide ratio of pupils to computers was reported in the District's Accountability Report as 6.5 to 1. The district reported having installed a new student information system called Power School that allowed parents online connections providing access to information about their children and the school. Various websites were available and there was Internet access reported for all secondary students and for 82% of elementary students.

University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN) Remedial Class Enrollments

Only one (3%) of the 31 recent graduates of PCSD that entered the UCCSN were required to enroll in a remedial class during the summer or fall semester of 2000. This was the best record that was reported for any school district in the state, according to the UCCSN report.

Expenditures

The state data tables revealed an average per-pupil expenditure by the PCSD in 1999-2000 of \$8,076, a decrease of \$99 per student from the previous year. Of that, \$5,064 per-pupil was spent on classroom instruction. These expenditures were \$2,661 per-pupil above the state averages overall and \$1,735 per pupil above the state averages for instruction.

The District reported their sources of revenue as state (50%), local (30%), federal (6%) and opening balances (14%).

Parent Involvement

Parental involvement as reflected in attendance at the initial parent/guardian and teacher conferences in the elementary schools for the year was reported in the state data tables as "High" for the two elementary schools. The District report specified that the attendance rate at 96%. The PCSD elementary schools focused on parent involvement as they carried out such activities as Principal's Breakfasts, Mileage Club (12,000+ miles

walked), Sign Language Club, Book Fairs, and Student Recognition programs involving parents. Parents are also involved in the active site councils of each school.

At the middle school the rate of attendance at the initial conferences rate remained steady (44.7%) as it did at the high school (19%). Parents were also involved in other ways at the secondary level. Each school at that level also 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, student performance, and program delivery.

2. *Areas the School District's 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 school district and district school site reports, Parts I and II, verified that progress toward the goals formulated for 1998-99 had been satisfactory relative to the areas addressed. These included increased student achievement with scores up over the previous year at all three levels and in all four areas tested. The district also reported implementation of selected learning programs in the core areas, adequate parent involvement, "curricular mapping" to state standards, employment of site-based site councils, greater availability and use of technological resources, achievement of secondary accreditation through the NWASC, and Internet connectivity.

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

The Pershing County HS science teacher, who was honored with a Presidential Award for Excellence in 1998-99, Valdine McLean, was selected as the Nevada Teacher of the Year for 2000-2001.

State standards are being implemented district-wide and "curriculum mapping" to align curriculum with those standards is now taking place.

The tenth grade TerraNova test scores showed a higher proportion of PCSD students in the top quarter on national norms and a smaller proportion in the bottom quarter the year before.

One hundred percent of seniors in 1999-2000 passed the High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) again this year.

Over 60% of the graduating class went on to post-secondary programs and only one of the 31 graduates of PCHS was required to take remedial classes after enrolling in the UCCSN.

At the middle school, all class scores in every subject area improved on the tests over the previous year and the grade 8 students earned the highest overall writing scores ever.

Nine of the grade 8 students traveled to Great America for maintaining a 3.0 Honor Roll average, good conduct, and no unexcused absences for all three years of attendance at the middle school.

Pershing County SD produced a National Merit Scholar in 1999-2000 and three Nevada Scholar recipients.

Thirty-three of the 54 graduates of PCHS qualified for a \$10,000 Millennium Scholarship.

Model programs cited as effective by Pershing County School District were Accelerated Math, Accelerated Reading, and Reading Recovery. New programs that will be adopted are Bridges Intellect Development and Power School.

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

The most apparent need, as identified by the District, is in the area of improving TerraNova test results, especially in grades 3 through 10. Evidence cited was the fact that more than a quarter of students at each grade level scored in the bottom quarter on national norms in each of the areas tested.

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

A plan for improvement was devised for each school in the District.

At the elementary level attention will be directed toward staff training in technology and its applications to instruction. Also the alignment of curriculum to meet the new state standards will be addressed. Remedial options for students who are deficient in math, reading, language arts, and science will be put in place, and an effort will be made to increase the participation by students in accelerated math and reading.

The middle school will continue to increase its Accelerated Mathematics components, and will conduct a daily tutorial program and an after school program in the school library to help students complete homework at school. The grade 6 Reading instruction will be moved earlier in the day and spelling instruction will be transferred to the English program. Phase II of the curriculum mapping effort (mapping courses to the state academic standards) will be addressed and completed by year's end. Several teachers will be sent to training sessions on this activity. Two new programs, "Bridges Program" and Power School, will be implemented in the middle school. Finally, the middle school will continue its summer school program to increase student skills in the basic skills.

The high school will continue using the Integrated Math course and will emphasize problem solving skills and basic math and reasoning. There will be special attention to the alignment of the science curriculum with state academic standards and to improving student achievement in this area. A new course, Life Science (previously Proficiency Science), will be developed concentrating on scientific reasoning and problem solving. There will be a focus on the integration and use of technology in math and science. Remedial and non-traditional English and history offerings will be continued for students deficient in these areas. Areas for concentrated effort in professional development will be the alignment of curriculum, curriculum mapping and skills, and applications in technology. Another part of the plan for the year will be to increase communication with parents and the community by use of the new parent Internet access, Power School, and initiation of regular TV programming.

At the district level, the study council will continue to monitor the academic programs, seeking ways to improve them. The district aims to implement a school information system that can be logged into by parents wishing current information regarding grades, activities, and administrative practices. Assisting each of the individual schools in their very important work of curriculum mapping, improving communications with parents, improving student learning and providing a safe environment in which learning can take place are top priorities of the district.

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

State accountability data have been addressed and used extensively for databased plans and decisions by the district. Internal data, both cross-sectional and longitudinal, are being employed in the work of the site councils and the district council. These come from various analyses and assessments, mostly at the site level. Also, PCSD will obviously continue to use all aspects of the assessment tools and the data that are produced by the state accountability system.

6. Missing or incomplete data.

Dropout data were missing from the district report and from the information submitted to the state. The percent of ninth graders earning too few credits to be promoted to tenth grade was not reported. The percentages of fourth and eighth graders demonstrating proficiency on all four writing traits were not reported.

The student to computer ratio reported in the District Accountability Report needs to be checked for accuracy.

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

Including the data that were missing in this year's report and verifying accuracy for future reports is strongly recommended.

The district accountability report continues to be improved each year, particularly Part III.

Numbering the pages of the District Accountability Report would be a service to readers.

The extension of the role and function of site councils to the district level as planned is noted and commended.

The District appears to be taking advantage of state resources to the extent that it can and to the extent that it qualifies. There was, however, little evidence of access to or use of federal sources of financial support. It appears doubtful that based on need, the District would be able to attract many additional funds from either level.

The District is especially encouraged to continue to work toward two of its identified goals: (1) providing clear linkages between accountability data and plans for improvement; and (2) alignment of its curriculum with state standards, especially in the core content areas.

An addition suggestion is that the district should consider addressing issues such as the 21% increase in violence in its report. A plan to reduce this figure would be appropriate.