

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. More building reports are more concise than in past years but others continue to deal in broad generalities, which fail to use appropriate data for planning and improvement. Several recommendations are provided for improving the report and complying with state and federal 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 Washoe County School District enrolled 54,508 students in 59 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, and 13 high schools in 1999-2000. In addition, there were four charter schools including a K-7 school (Sierra Nevada Academy), a K-8 school (Nevada Leadership Academy), a middle school (Coral Academy of Science), and a high school (I Can Do Anything). The state data tables showed a student enrollment growth rate of 3.2% from the previous school year

Student Attendance Rate

The district-wide attendance rate was 94%, an increase of approximately 1% from the previous year. The attendance rate ranged from 90% to 98%, with the exception of Washoe High School, an alternative school, with a rate of 79%, which was the same rate as in the previous year. All three schools that reported a less than 90% rate of attendance the previous year increased their attendance rate to above 90% (Natchez Elementary, Traner Middle, and Hug High School).

Teacher Attendance Rate

The average daily teacher attendance rates at the elementary school level ranged from 92.5% to 98.2% and at the secondary level from 93.9% to 98%.

Dropout and Non-Promotion Rates

The district-wide high school dropout rate was 5.2%, a significant decrease from the rate of 7.3% of the previous year. The dropout rate has been steadily decreasing during the last few years from four years ago at 8%, two years of 7.3%, and the current year's 5.2%.

The district-wide rate of non-promotion for each grade was slightly lower than the state average except for first, fourth, and fifth grade, whereas in the previous year, the district-wide rate in general was slightly higher than the state average. The percentages reported for the current and previous years' non-promotion rates indicate that each grade has seen a minor to significant drop in the rate. The non-promotion rates were 0.6% (0.7% prior year) in kindergarten, 3.3% (3.8% prior year); in first grade, 0.8% (1.6% prior year); in second grade, 0.6% (1.4% prior year); in third grade, 0.5% (1.1% prior year); in fourth grade, 0.4% (0.6% prior year); in fifth grade, 0.2% (0.5% prior year); in sixth grade, 0.8% (2.0% prior year); in seventh grade, and 0.2% (1.3% prior year) in eighth grade.

The percentage of ninth graders accumulating too few credits to be considered as tenth graders at the beginning of the next school year was not reported for the district as a whole. This rate at individual schools ranged from a low of zero to highs of 9.5% at Hug High School and 9.1% at Sparks High School.

Student Completion Indices

During 1999-2000, 2,123 (81.2%) high school students received a standard diploma, 116 (4.4%) received an adjusted diploma, and 109 (4.2%) received a certificate of attendance. However, 10.2% of the high school students were not accounted for.

Transiency Rate

The transiency rate ranged from 9% to 54%, with a district-wide average of 28%. This average rate was 5% lower than the previous year's 33%. Five of 59 elementary schools and none of the secondary schools reported a transiency rate of over 40%, which is a significant decrease from 21 elementary and 6 secondary schools in the previous year. However, the district-wide average of 28% is the fourth highest among all districts in Nevada.

Student/Teacher Ratios

The average class sizes for elementary and secondary levels in 1999-2000 were similar to or slightly lower than the statewide average. At the elementary level the ratios ranged from 16:1 to 25:1, which were similar to or slightly lower than the previous year's ratios in the district. At the secondary level, the ratios for four core subjects ranged from 22:1 to 24:1, which showed a decrease in all core subjects from the previous year's ratios.

The number of elementary schools with class sizes of 30 or higher were six in kindergarten, five in fourth grade, three in fifth grade, and one in sixth grade. Class sizes of secondary classes in the four core areas ranged from 4 to 30. Only at two middle schools did the average class size for any core subject reach 30 – at one school for science classes and at another school for social studies classes.

Student/Counselor Ratios

The district-wide student-counselor ratio of 453:1 was slightly higher than the 432:1 ratio in the previous year and lower than the average statewide ratio of 534.4:1 in 1999-2000. The ratio at the elementary level varied widely, ranging from 50:1 to 1,500:1, with an average ratio of 741:1. Sixteen elementary schools reported over 1,000 students per counselor. The ratio at the secondary level ranged from 63:1 to 368:1, with average ratios of 300:1 at the middle schools and 298:1 at the high schools.

Suspension/Expulsion Rate

The number of elementary suspensions, expulsions, or referrals for violence to other students increased, district-wide, in 1999-2000. The reported instances of violence against other students in elementary schools were highest in Lemmon Valley with 50, Stead with 40, Desert Heights with 36, Duncan with 35, Alice Smith with 31, Corbett with 23, and Mitchell with 21. Most of these schools reported more instances of violence than in the previous year.

At the secondary level, the number of reported instances of violence to other students fluctuated from the previous year. Whereas some schools saw a decline, other schools reported a large increase in the number of instances. Three middle schools (Billingshurst, O'Brien, and Pine) reported more than 60 instances of violence against other students. Middle schools with an increase of more than 10 instances of violence against other students since the previous year were Mendive with 33 (18 prior year), O'Brien with 83 (77 prior year), and Sparks with 27 (15 prior year). Middle schools with a decline of more than 10 instances of violence against students were Clayton with 22 (50 prior year), Pine with 66 (95 prior year), Swope with 29 (60 prior year), and Traner with 38 (51 prior year).

The number of incidences of violence to school staff decreased to six in the middle schools from 17 in the previous year. Clayton and Pine also reported cases involving possession of a dangerous weapon (two incidents each). The number of instances of possession or use of controlled substance increased slightly from the previous year, even with Billingshurst's decline in the number of instances from 22 to 13 in 1999-2000.

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 five-year period (from 85 to 76 to 67 to 14 to 7 instances). High schools with an increase of more than 10 instances of violence against other students since the previous year were Galena with 43 (21 prior year), Hug with 109 (61 prior year), and Reed with 96 (84 prior year). High schools with a decline of more than 10 instances of violence against students were Reno with 21 (33 prior year), Sparks with 60 (86 prior year), and Wooster with 38 (50 prior year). Hug High School also had three instances of violence against school staff. Seven of 13 high schools reported experiencing more than 10 incidents of drug possession. Reed reported the highest number with 31 incidents. Five high schools also reported more than 10 incidents of alcohol possession.

Numbers of students expelled as habitual disciplinary problems

Not reported for either elementary or secondary level.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova, Fourth Grade

TerraNova Results 4th 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	22.7	20.3	21	21.9	24.1	53	51	54
Language	22	20.3	19.1	25	31.2	33.0	52	57	59
Math	23	23.1	19.6	21	22.1	24.4	50	51	54
Science	11	20.7	19.8	27	23.1	25.1	60	53	55

The district-wide performance of fourth graders in Washoe County on the TerraNova test in fall 2000 showed improvement from the previous year in all four areas. Achievement in reading, language, math, and science scores ranked at the 54th, 59th, 54th, and 55th percentiles, respectively. Only the average math score was lower than the statewide average of the 57th percentile. However, the math score has been on the rise steadily in the last four years from the 45th percentile in 1997 to the 51st in 1999, and to the 54th percentile in 2000. This trend is also found in the language area (from 50th to 52nd to 57th to 59th). Over 99% of eligible fourth grade students in Washoe County took the tests in 2000.

Three schools' performance on TerraNova tests was exemplary in the fall of 2000. Lenz Elementary School continued to show high achievement in all four areas, with average national percentile ranks of 77 in reading, 80 in language, 85 in math, and 82 in science, and more than 50% of students scoring in the top quarter in all four areas. Huffaker and Winnemucca elementary schools showed dramatic increases in student achievement in all four areas, with more than 50% of students scoring in the top quarter in all four areas. Huffaker's average national percentile ranks were 80 in reading, 87 in language, 85 in math, and 79 in science, and those of Winnemucca were at 74 in reading, 79 in language, 72 in math, and 75 in science.

Two elementary schools, Caughlin Ranch and Hunsberger, also achieved very high scores on the TerraNova test with all four areas ranking higher than the 70th percentile on the national norms. More than 50% of fourth graders at Caughlin Ranch Elementary School scored in the top quarter in reading, language, and science, with 41% in the top quarter in math. More than 40% of the fourth graders at Hunsberger Elementary School scored in the top quarter in all four areas.

At four elementary schools – Allen, Anderson, Booth, and Natchez – more than 40% were in the bottom quarter on national norms in three of the four areas tested.

Charter Schools

Achievement of fourth graders at Nevada Leadership Academy ranked at the 32nd, 27th, 29th, and 33rd percentiles in reading, language, math, and science, respectively. More than 40% of the fourth graders’ scores fell in the bottom quarter of national norms in reading (46.7%) and science (41.2%).

TerraNova test scores of fourth graders at Sierra Nevada Academy decreased in general from the previous year, ranking at the 27th, 19th, 26th, and 37th percentiles in reading, language, math, and science. More than 40% of students scored in the bottom quarter in three of the four areas, with 47.6% in the bottom quarter in reading, 59.1% in language, and 50% in math.

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova, Eighth Grade

**TerraNova Results
8th 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	17	18.5	19.9	32	30.9	30.9	59	58	57
Language	19	18.6	18.9	29	27.6	28.7	57	56	57
Math	28	26.5	24.7	24	25.1	25.5	48	50	51
Science	12	19.0	18.4	26	26.4	26.5	58	55	56

The performances of eighth graders on the fall 2000 TerraNova test were similar to those of the previous year in all four areas. Their average percentile ranks at the 57th percentile in reading, the 57th percentile in language, and the 56th percentile in science are above the national and state averages. The average percentile rank of 51 in math was slightly lower than the state average of 52. However, the average math scores in the district have been on the rise from 45th, to 48th, to 50th, and to 51st percentile in the fall of 2000. Over 98% of eligible eighth graders were reported as having taken the test in 2000.

Charter schools

The performance of eighth graders at Coral Academy of Science ranked at the 58th percentile in reading, the 52nd percentile in language, the 41st percentile in math, and the 43rd percentile in science. Language, math, and science scores were below the district averages.

No TerraNova scores for the Nevada Leadership Academy were reported due to the small number of students taking TerraNova in the fall 2000 (fewer than ten students).

State Mandated Test Results: TerraNova, Tenth Grade

**TerraNova Results
10th 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	20	19.2	13.2	32	31.3	37.9	59	59	67
Language	14	17.2	10.5	31	29.6	34.8	61	58	65
Math	21	22.2	12.9	30	31.5	41.6	57	57	68
Science	7	18.2	11.4	30	33.9	43.5	63	60	69

The tenth graders' achievement scores on the Fall 2000 TerraNova test showed dramatic increases in all four areas from the prior year, with averages at the 67th percentile in reading, the 65th percentile in language, the 68th percentile in math, and the 69th in science. These scores were well above the national and state averages. The percentage of eligible tenth graders taking the test was 95.6%.

Students at Reno High School continued to demonstrate the highest average performance among the district's high schools, with scores at the 76th percentile in reading, the 73rd in language, the 80th in math, and the 76th percentile in science. Over 50% of students scored in the top quarter in three areas (reading, math, and science), with 49.8% in the top quarter in language.

Incline and McQueen high schools also achieved very high scores on the 2000 TerraNova test with scores in all four areas ranking higher than the 70th percentile on the national ranks. Over 40% of students in both high schools scored in the top quarter in reading and languages and over 50% in math and science.

Charter Schools

The TerraNova performance of the tenth graders at I Can Do Anything (ICDA) showed an improvement in general from the prior year, ranking at the 47th percentile in reading, the 33rd in language, the 24th in math, and the 46th in science. However, more than 40% of ICDA tenth graders scored in the bottom quarter in language (43.8%) and math (52.9%). Only 78.3% of eligible tenth graders in ICDA took the tests.

State Mandated Test Results: Writing Exams

**Writing Examination
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	66.5	56.7	55.5	80.0	84.7	81.8
Organization	59.8	51.7	54.5	74.9	81.0	78.4
Voice	61.6	49.5	49.9	75.9	79.5	76.2
Conventions	58.6	50.9	56.7	66.9	74.6	74.6

Percentages of fourth graders demonstrating proficiency on the fourth grade Writing Exam in 2000-01 were above the state average, with 35.7% of the students being proficient in all four writing traits. Proficiency was demonstrated by 55.5% of fourth graders on the trait of Ideas, by 54.5% on Organization, by 49.9% on Voice, and by 56.7% on Conventions.

The percentages of eighth graders demonstrating writing competency were above the state average in all four categories. Average percentages of proficiency in writing Ideas, Organization, Voice, and Conventions were 81.8%, 78.4%, 76.2%, and 74.6%, respectively. The percent of eighth graders who were competent in all four writing traits was 62.95, in comparison with the statewide average of 56%.

Charter Schools

The fourth-grade Writing Exam scores at Nevada Leadership Academy were lower than the district averages. The average percentages of proficiency in writing Ideas, Organization, Voice, and Conventions were 33.3%, 40.0%, 26.7%, and 40.0%, respectively. The Academy reported 46.7% as the percent of students being proficient in all four writing traits, though this was inconsistent with the proficiency percentages on the individual traits.

The Writing Exam scores at Sierra Nevada Academy were well below the district averages, with only 14.3% of the students being proficient in all four writing traits. Average percentages of proficiency in writing Ideas, Organization, Voice, and Conventions were 38.1%, 38.1%, 38.1%, and 33.3%, respectively.

Charter Schools

Scores for the eighth grade Writing Exam of Coral Academy of Science and Nevada Leadership Academy were not reported.

State Mandated Test Results: High School Proficiency Exam

High School Proficiency Examination

PERCENT PASSING									% DID NOT EARN DIPLOMA		
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
98.7	98.9	99.2	98.6	97.9	96.2	99.2	99.3	99.2	NA	3.3	4.0

Students taking the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam in 1999-2000 demonstrated proficiency rates of 99.2% in reading, 96.2% in math, and 99.2% in writing, showing a slight increase in reading proficiency and a decline in math proficiency from the prior year, and maintaining the similar level in writing. Four percent of students were denied a diploma due to failing the exam in 1999-2000.

Charter schools

The passing rates of the tenth graders at ICDA were 100% in reading, 77.8% in math, and 100% in writing, indicating an improvement from the prior year. However, the passing rate for math was far below the district passing rate.

ACT/SAT Results

ACT Results

% SENIORS TAKING ACT			ACT COMPOSITE SCORE		
97-98	98-99	99-00	97-98	98-99	99-00
48	44	46	22.2	22.3	22.3

Forty-six percent of the high school students in the district took the ACT, and 38% took the SAT exam. The average score of 22.3 on the ACT was above the state average of 21.5.

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
37	36	38	528	524	530	529	531	533

Forty-six percent of the high school students in the district took the ACT, and 38% took the SAT exam. The average score of 22.3 on the ACT was above the state average of 21.5. Scores of Washoe County students on the SAT were higher than in the prior year and were also above state averages – an average verbal score of 530 in comparison with the state average of 510, and an average math score of 533, in comparison with the state average of 517. Gerlach, ICDA, and Washoe High did not report either ACT and SAT results due to the small number of students having taken the tests.

Special Programs

Wide variations in enrollment in special education classes and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes continued in the 1999-2000 school year. Enrollment in special education classes varied from school to school, reflecting the district's practice of concentrating students with similar needs at some schools: Elementary schools ranged from 2% to 27.6% in special education enrollment and secondary schools from 1.1% to 21%, with a district average of 11% of students enrolled in special education. The proportion of students receiving ESL instructions also varied widely, ranging from 0% to 47% at the elementary level, and from 0% to 19.4% at the secondary level, with a district average of 9.6%. At Loder, Mathews, Sierra Vista, Kate Smith, Smithridge, and Veterans over 35% of students received ESL instruction. These five schools also reported over 60% of students receiving free or reduced-price meals (the district average at the elementary level was 33.8%). Among middle schools, Traner reported the highest rates in special education (21%), ESL (12.7%), and free or reduced-price meal programs (65.3%).

One hundred percent of elementary school students participated in art, music, physical education, and computer education. At the middle school level, average participation rates were 32% in music, 26% in art, 31% in foreign language, and 11% in athletics. At the high school level, average participation rates were 17% in music, 34% in art, 33% in foreign language, 28% in athletics, 44% in occupational education, and 13% in advanced placement courses.

An average of 3.1% elementary students participated in gifted and talented education, with the percentage at each school ranging from 0% to 12.1%. At the middle school level, participation in gifted and talented programming averaged 4.2% (from 1.8% to 9.3%), and at the high school level, an average of 6.1% participated in gifted and talented

education (from 0% to 18.6%). A district-wide average of 0.3% of students participated in the migrant services program.

Teachers

Thirty-one percent of Washoe County teachers had more than 10 years of experience. Twenty-four percent were new or had taught less than 3 years, 45% had taught from 3 to 10 years, 20% from 11 to 20 years, and 11% for 21 or more years. The percentages of classes taught by teachers out of their license areas in the four core subjects were 0.6% in English, 0.1% in math, 2.9% in social studies, and none in science. Two middle schools reported relatively high percentages of classes taught by teachers outside license area: O'Brien Middle School with 13% of English classes and 25% of social studies classes; Incline Middle School with 38% of social studies taught by teachers without appropriate licenses. Ninety-six percent of the teachers taught within their area of licensure. Forty-five percent of teachers held a bachelor's degree and 55% held an advanced degree (either a master's or a doctorate).

Technology/Computers

All elementary and secondary school students had access to the Internet. The student-to-computer ratio varied widely from 1:1 to 25:1 at the elementary level with a median ratio of 8:1. The ratio varied from 2:1 to 15:1 at the secondary level with a median ratio of 6:1. These median ratios were lower than those of the previous year.

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

Of the 1,134 recent graduates of the Washoe County School District attending Nevada universities and community colleges, 397 students, 34.7%, were enrolled in remedial courses at UCCSN.

Expenditures

The average district-wide per-pupil expenditure was \$5,285, with approximately 66% (\$3,463) spent on instruction. At the elementary and middle school levels, per-pupil expenditures were fairly uniform. The per-pupil expenditures of Natchez Elementary School (\$8,205) and Traner Middle School (\$7,289) were somewhat higher than those of other schools. At the high school level, a remote rural high school (Gerlach) reported the highest per pupil cost of \$12,235, with \$6,997 expended on instruction. Incline (\$7,071) and Washoe high schools (\$7,218), with smaller enrollments, also reported higher expenditures than other schools. Sources of revenue by percentages were 62.7% from local sources, 30.8% from state sources, 4.4% from federal sources, and 2.5% from opening balance and other.

The federal remedial funds that Washoe County received in 1999-2000 were \$2,973,646 from Title I Remedial Education Funds, and \$304,775 from Comprehensive

School Reform Demonstration Funds. The state remediation funds provided \$812,910 from Low Performing Schools Funds, and \$179,890 from Before/After/Summer Schools Funds. Other remediation funds provided to Washoe County Schools totaled \$1,155,200.

Parent Involvement

The district-wide parent involvement rate at elementary schools, as indicated by parent or guardian attendance at the first parent-teacher conference in the fall of 1999, ranged from 70.4% to 100%, with an overall rate of 90.4%, rated as "high." This average was a slightly lower percentage than the prior year's 93%. Activities related to parental and community involvements were highlighted in both the district and individual school reports. Among highlighted activities were promoting regular communications between home and school, supporting parenting skills, assisting student learning, volunteering, and involving parents and community members in decision-making.

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 Washoe County School District's Part III Report consisted of two major sections: The 1999-2000 District Overview and accountability reports from individual schools in the district. The district overview summarized: (a) areas of exemplary achievement or improvement; (b) missing data; (c) fiscal and non-fiscal costs to comply with NRS 385.347; (d) 2000-2001 efforts for improving achievement; and (e) areas where improvement will be focused for 2001-2002.

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

(a) Academic Achievement

No school in the Washoe County School District was designated as "demonstrating need of improvement."

Three schools, Huffaker, Lenz, and Winnemucca Elementary Schools, were in the "exemplary achievement" category, and five schools, Caughlin Ranch and Hunsberger Elementary Schools, and Incline, McQueen, and Reno High Schools were among the seven schools state wide in the "high achievement" category.

Students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 10 scored above the national average Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) score of 50 on the spring/fall 2000 TerraNova.

Scores for both ACT and SAT continued to be above the state and national averages.

Reno and McQueen High Schools were named among the top 400 high schools in America for students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses.

Washoe County was the largest school district in the United States mandating that all students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses take the AP exams for those courses. The district had a total of 68 AP scholars in 1999-2000.

TerraNova test scores in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades, writing traits proficiency exam scores, and high school proficiency exam scores were summarized, noting their improvement or exemplary achievement where appropriate.

(b) Efforts to improve academic achievement and reach academic excellence included the following:

WCSD initiated an intensive curriculum plan.

Mandatory summer school was utilized for those students with low TerraNova scores.

Tenth grade TerraNova results were used as a guide for recommending remedial work.

A variety of programs such as Reading Recovery, Success for All, the California Early Language Literacy program (CELL), the Extended Language Literacy program (ExLL), and school-wide reading programs were implemented.

Other efforts such as Action Research Projects, the NovaNET, Summer School Attendance Intervention program, and International Baccalaureate curriculum were highlighted.

The overall transiency rate decreased from 33% to 28%

The overall average daily attendance increased from 92.9% to 94%, noting an increase in all levels.

The overall dropout rate for grades 9 to 12 also decreased from 7.3% to 5.2%. The decrease in dropout rate was attributed to this being a goal for all schools and the district increasing its educational option offerings.

The increased number of suspensions, expulsions and referrals related to school safety was viewed as indicating that schools in WCSD were safer rather than less safe than in the prior year. The increased number of reported incidents was believed by the district to be the result of better reporting by the schools.

At the individual school sites, frequently cited areas of exemplary achievement or improvement were student achievement, parental involvement, school safety, and

increases in attendance. In some schools, staff professional development was credited for their improved achievement. In other schools, special programs such as Success for All, California Early Literacy Learning (CELL), Extended Literacy Learning (ExLL), Summer Literacy Program, Reading Recovery Program, and Accelerated Reader Program were credited for the improvement. Character education programs such as "Learning for Life" or other district-based violence intervention programs were credited for improved school safety. Increased attendance rates in various schools were attributed to new attendance plans the schools employed, Success For All attendance monitoring, and/or family support. Other areas such as library improvement, music program, career fair, or science fair project were also included in the achievement areas.

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

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

Part III of the district overview identified areas where improvement will be targeted in 2001-2002.

Fourth and eighth grade mathematics. The district reported that fourth and eighth graders' performance in math was showing steady improvement, but also recognized that their scores were still slightly behind the state average. The district reported its plans for improving math achievement.

Eighth grade writing proficiency exam. The district reported decreases in the percentage of eighth graders proficient on all four writing traits from 64.4% of the prior year to 62.9% in 1999-2000. Many of the schools planned staff development in writing traits analysis and were planning to emphasize writing across the curriculum. The similar plans were reported in the prior year for the fourth grade writing proficiency. The fourth grade scores improved, possibly due in part to the district's efforts.

Teacher certification. The report addressed decreases in percent of teachers teaching out of their area of license, and providing additional inservice targeted at those individuals who are teaching out of their area of license.

Individual schools identified specific areas in need of improvement. The most frequently cited area of need was student achievement. Most schools provided specific plans to implement or expand certain programs to improve student performance on tests. Other areas in need of improvement included school safety, daily attendance, dropout, parental/community involvement, student behavior management, and professional development.

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

Student performance on TerraNova tests, writing exam scores, and proficiency exam scores continue to be the primary sources in determining the effectiveness of the plans the buildings adopted for improvement. Other sources include performance on other exams, number of students who participate in and complete certain programs, record of staff development activities, survey results, records of home visits, and the phone logs.

In some schools, these sources were depicted in the action plans and/or in the methods for assessing the effectiveness of the plan for improvement. However, many **schools, even** some of those schools with specific action plans, did not specify sources for assessing effectiveness.

6. *Missing or incomplete data.*

The category of threats or extortion was omitted from the district report, as was the number of students expelled as "habitual disciplinary problems."

The first page (p. 33) of the 1999-2000 district report of the suspension/expulsion rates at the elementary school level was from the 1998-1999 academic year rather than 1999-2000.

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 accountability reports of the Washoe County School District indicate that the district and the individual schools have put forth efforts to address the recommendations from last year's review panel. A large number of building reports showed evidence that the accountability data have been utilized effectively in planning for improvement. The district reported that no school was in the "demonstrating need of improvement" category, three schools were in the "exemplary achievement" category, and five schools were in the "high achievement" category. This might very well be one of the strongest evidences regarding the effective use of accountability data.

The math scores have been an area needing improvement in prior years' reports. As is evident in the Part III report district overview, the district made efforts to improve students' math performance. The math scores of fourth and eighth graders have shown steady improvement. It was also acknowledged in the report that the math scores continue to be slightly below the state average and that the district will continue to focus on the improvement of student performance in math by adopting new strategies. The district's effort to utilize the accountability data effectively was also evident in the falling dropout rate and retention rate.

Although the effective use of accountability data is evident from their enhanced test performance and other areas reported in the district's and individual schools' reports, some schools are still not showing their effective utilization of the school accountability data to determine the areas needing improvement and to plan for further actions. Some areas of concerns, commendations, and recommendations are listed below:

In comparison with previous years, more buildings now provide specific plans for improvement and delineate assessment approaches to measure the effectiveness of the plans that will be implemented. For example, schools such as Allen, Booth, and Lincoln Park Elementary Schools reported lower performance in TerraNova tests, identified the areas of needing improvement, and outlined specific plans to improve need areas. However, some schools continued to address their plans in highly general terms (e.g., "We will continue to emphasize the importance of standardized tests...."). Other schools utilized the accountability data only partially. The accountability report deals with many areas (test performance, school safety, etc.), but some schools discussed only some of the need areas. For instance, when two tested areas were reported needing improvement in the accountability data, only one of them was addressed. Still other schools neither acknowledged needs nor provided specific plans to improve need areas.

Some examples of the schools that made use of the accountability data effectively are: Alice Maxwell Elementary School, Traner Middle School, and Sparks High School.

The schools that were funded for remediation due to low performance in prior years performed better in the fall of 2000. Corbett, Johnson, Mathews, and Risley Elementary Schools reported that none of the four tested areas had over 40% students falling in the bottom quarter. However, one funded elementary school still reported having over 40% of its students falling in the bottom quarter in three of the four test areas, and three new elementary schools were added to the list of low performing schools. Development of district-wide plans along with building plans for assisting these schools is recommended.

The district-wide number of students suspended, expelled, or referred to an alternative educational setting for possession of a dangerous weapon declined steadily over a four-year period. However, violence against other students increased. Although the district viewed the increase in numbers rather positively, plans to reduce violence against other students should be devised. When the number of incidents was reduced in the prior year from the year before, the district attributed the decrease to the various conflict resolution programs.

At the building level, Lemmon Valley, Stead, Desert Heights, and Mitchell Elementary Schools, O'Brien and Billingshurst Middle Schools, and Clayton High School provided detailed action plans to reduce violence in their schools. However, other schools with a high number of violent incidents did not provide or provided only cursory plans for improvement.

Although there were no schools in Washoe County that had less than 90% average daily attendance rate in 1999-2000, three schools (Natchez Elementary School, Traner

Middle School, and Hug High School) had experienced the rate of less than 90% in the 1997-98 and 1998-99. In efforts to continue to improve the attendance rate, Traner Middle School explicitly laid out plans to improve the rate. However, the other two schools failed to do the same. Continued efforts and improvement plans may be required to maintain or improve the attendance rate.

Many individual schools adopted professional development in efforts to increase student performance. However, some schools with students needing improvement in some subject matter areas did not seem to utilize professional development as an avenue to increase student learning.

The tenth graders' achievement scores on the fall 2000 TerraNova test showed a dramatic increase in all four areas. These average scores were well above the national and state averages. Close examination of the scores and number of students that took the exams indicate that although percentages of eligible students having taken the tests in Fall 2000 were similar to those of the prior year, the numbers of students who took the tests were significantly reduced. This phenomenon is seen as rather abnormal because the high school enrollment rates were increased in most individual schools.

Many of the district schools reported developing or adopting new curriculum (e.g., Core Knowledge Curriculum) in efforts to enhance student learning.

One additional recommendation is that the district begins to address, in the report, issues such as the high rate of remediation required for recent graduates in the UCCSN and violence rates at some schools.

Charter schools

Except for Sierra Nevada Academy, the other three charter schools, ICDA High School, Coral Academy of Science, and Nevada Leadership Academy, did not provide the building-level report (Part I of the accountability report).

Part III of the ICDA's accountability report is exemplary, with key elements of the report clearly indicating the areas of exemplary achievement and areas in need of improvement. For those areas showing improvement, the reasons for the improvement were explained. For the areas needing improvement, action plans were detailed. The ICDA's efforts to achieve goals in various areas were laid out in a table, with a specified goal listed on top, and then action steps, time line, person responsible, resources, and evaluation plans listed for each action step.

Only a one-page summary for Part III was provided by Nevada Leadership Academy. The summary did not show an effort to address the plans to improve the areas that need particular attention (e.g., language, science, and writing achievement).

Fourth-grade students' performance at Sierra Nevada Academy has decreased. Although an intention to develop a five-year strategic plan that will address student

achievement and other areas was expressed, detailed improvement plans are necessary to move the intention forward. More effective use of the accountability data should be considered.

Coral Academy of Science's Part III report shows the effective use of the accountability data. Areas in need of improvement were identified and the action plans were specified under each area needing improvement. The academy pointed out that eighth graders' scores in math and science fell below the district students' average. The academy indicated that the results of the TerraNova scores reflected only a two-month period of instruction at Coral Academy and provided plans to improve the science, math, and technology education.