

# Designing an Accountability System that Measures Opportunities for a Sound Basic Education

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## Overview

- **The inclusion of opportunity indicators**
- **A focus on growth**
- **Assessing whether students are receiving a sound basic education**
- **Discussion**

## Measuring Progress on Key Elements of a Sound Basic Education

Accountability systems can include a full set of opportunity to learn indicators that can measure student access to a Sound Basic Education including the:

- access students have to a full array of college preparatory coursework (for example;
- access students have to high-quality CTE coursework;
- access students have to an inclusive and supportive learning environment (for example using measures of school climate, chronic absenteeism, and suspension);
- percentage of fully qualified teachers;
- percentage of inexperienced teachers;
- percentage of Nationally Board Certified teachers;
- qualifications of principals;
- access students have to learning materials; and
- access to integrated student supports

Suspension Rates	School Climate	Chronic Absenteeism	Extended-Year Graduation Rates	College- and Career-Readiness
<p><b>How Can States Use Indicators of Opportunity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Accountability:</b> States can use a measure of the indicator to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) or targeted support and improvement (TSI) in their accountability systems.</li> <li>▪ <b>Improvement:</b> States can use a measure of the indicator to target resources and inform improvement efforts in identified schools or as part of a comprehensive statewide approach to school improvement.</li> <li>▪ <b>Other Uses:</b> Additional efforts states can use to measure or improve school performance on this indicator.</li> </ul>				

## Opportunity Indicators

Research shows that data from these types of indicators can provide the State, districts, and schools with the information needed to determine which actions are required to ensure that all students have the opportunity for a sound basic education, including what actions are necessary and/or what programmatic initiatives should be implemented.

### Indicators of opportunity includes measures of:

1. Exclusionary school discipline
2. School climate
3. Chronic absenteeism
4. Extended-year graduation rates
5. College and career readiness

## Research on Exclusionary School Discipline

- Research shows reducing the use of out-of-school suspensions, after controlling for race and poverty, correlates with higher test scores, not lower.
- Students who are removed from school lose instructional time and tend to have lower academic success, higher rates of grade retention, lower graduation rates, and are more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.
- When students are regularly removed from the classroom, they fall behind in their classwork, and they experience a social and emotional distancing and disengagement from school.
- In an effort to reduce the use of exclusionary practices, many schools have moved to establish social-emotional supports for students, as well as restorative justice practices centered on promoting respect, taking responsibility, and strengthening relationships. For example, as a result of these policies California schools became much safer during this time with fewer incidents and less violence. Between 2011 and 2016, suspensions declined by 33.6%, driven by a 77% decline in suspensions for “willful defiance,” and expulsions dropped 40.4%.

## Impact on Historically Underserved Students

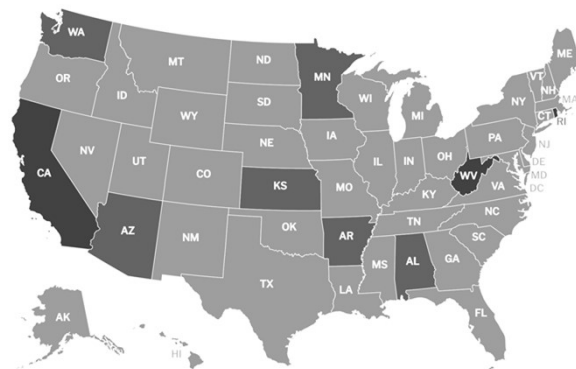
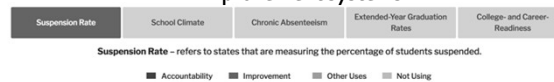
During the 2015–16 school year:

- African American male students were 8% of students enrolled and 25% of students who received an out-of-school suspension.
- White male students were 25% of students enrolled and 24% of students who received an out-of-school suspension.
- African American female students were 8% of students enrolled and 14% of students who received an out-of-school suspension.
- White female students were 24% of students enrolled and 8% of students who received an out-of-school suspension.
- Students with disabilities were 12% of students enrolled and 26% of students who received an out-of-school suspension.

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## State Efforts to Address the Overuse of Student Suspensions

Nine states are using a measure of student suspensions in their accountability and improvement systems



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## Implementation Considerations

- Does the state's data system provide schools with access to the information needed to assess patterns in rates of suspension or expulsion (e.g., specific classrooms, grade levels, times of year, etc.) and allow for timely intervention by school or district leadership?
- Does the state's data system allow schools to track multiple suspensions for individual students; the average length of suspensions; and the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions?
- Does your state prohibit the use of corporal punishment in public schools—which is used disproportionately with African American students—in the 19 states that still allow it?
- Does your state or district eliminate referrals to law enforcement for all nonviolent, noncriminal offenses by developing model school discipline policy and agreements that clarify the distinction between educator and law-enforcement discipline?

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## How to Use this Information to Drive School Improvement

### States and districts can better reduce rates of student suspension by:

- Eliminating zero-tolerance policies and the use of suspensions and expulsions for lower-level offenses and replace them with supportive, inclusive, and effective strategies that address student misbehavior with alternatives that teach responsibility, including restorative justice programs that emphasize repairing the harm caused by problematic behavior.
- Providing both schoolwide professional development for teachers and targeted coaching based on classroom-level data. Because research indicates that there is a relationship between a high suspension rate and a higher than average number of novice teachers or those without preparation, such training might be particularly focused on educators in their early careers.
- Providing training on implicit bias and asset-based youth development for teachers, administrators, school resource officers, police, juvenile judges, and others working with children and youth.

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## Resources on Suspension Rates

[School Discipline Organizations and Resources](#) (American Association of School Administrators and the Children's Defense Fund). This resource provides an overview of organizations and resources that provide focused supports relating to improving discipline.

[Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook for LEA and School Leaders](#) (Council of Chief State School Officers and Partners for Each and Every Child). This handbook offers several resources for policies that remove police from schools, replacing them with effective staff-led strategies for classroom management, conflict resolution, and mediation.

[Locked Out of the Classroom: How Implicit Bias Contributes to Disparities in School Discipline](#) (NAACP Legal Defense Fund). This report examines how disparities in school discipline result from implicit bias and perpetuate stereotypes and provides interventions to help improve relationships between teachers and students.

[Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know](#) (American Federation of Teachers). This article describes the importance of addressing implicit bias in education, how unconscious attitudes can affect disciplinary decisions, and how teachers can mitigate the effects of implicit bias.

[Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers](#) (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs). This document summarizes evidence-based, positive, proactive, and responsive classroom behavior intervention and support strategies for teachers.

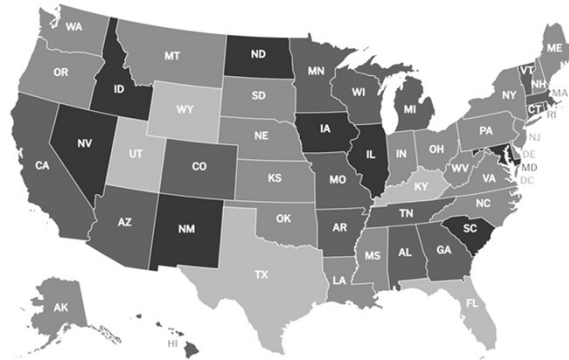
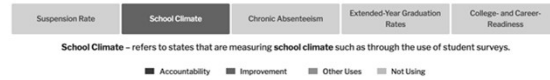
## Why Building a Positive School Climate Matters

School climate measures can show the degree to which a school is supportive of each students' social and emotional development.



## State Efforts to Measure School Climate

Eight states are using student surveys in their accountability systems and an additional 16 describe how they will use strategies for improving school climate.



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## Implementation Considerations

- What state-level support is available or technical assistance is available to help develop school climate programs?
- How does your state use ESSA Title I, Title II, and Title IV funds to improve school climate?
- Does your state or district provide resources to expand restorative justice and social-emotional programs?
- Does your state or district provide resources to improve cultural competence, culturally relevant curricula or trauma-informed education approaches?

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## How to Use this Information to Drive School Improvement

States and districts can better implement measures of school climate by:

- Partnering with community-based organizations to create or build on existing interventions regarding youth development, parent engagement, and/or mental and behavioral health.
- Identifying ways to acknowledge success and share best practices of schools that have improved school climate.
- Providing schools with resources and technical assistance, and professional development to train staff in the analysis of the data they collect.

## Resources on School Climate

**School Climate Guide for District Policymakers and Education Leaders** (Center for Social and Emotional Education and the National School Boards Association). This guide highlights districts that are using the National School Climate Standards and provides a framework state decision makers can follow to utilize school climate measures.

**School Climate Measurement and Analysis** (National School Climate Center). This brief by the National School Climate Center (NSCC) provides practical advice for schools that are trying to implement measures of school climate and effectively use student responses to improve student achievement.

**Safe Space Kit** (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network). This guide to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students in schools provides steps for schools to build safe spaces as well as resources to help students become allies to LGBT students.



## Why Reducing Rates of Chronic Absenteeism Matters

Ensuring that all students receive the support they need to remain present and engaged in learning throughout their k-12 experience begins with obtaining an accurate picture of how much instructional time students are losing and why.



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## Impact on Historically Underserved Students

**Chronic Absenteeism** negatively impacts students' school performance, high school graduation rates, and students' overall success in adulthood.

- In early grades, has been found to predict students' levels of success in later grades and the likelihood of dropping out of school.
- **Students who are chronically absent are 68% less likely than other students to graduate.**

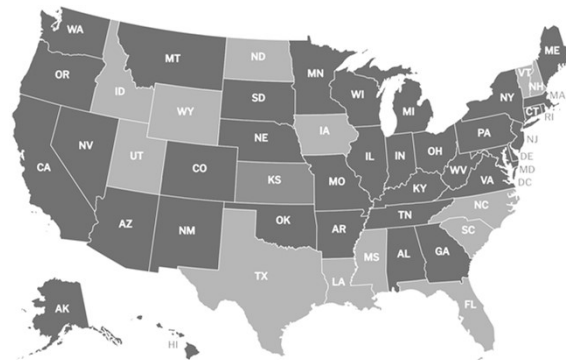
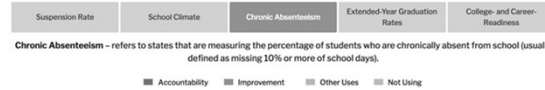
Students of color are disproportionately chronically absent compared to their White peers:

- **Latinx students are 11% more likely to be chronically absent,**
- **African American students are 36% more likely, and**
- **Native American and Pacific Islander students are over 65% more likely to miss significant school time.**

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# State Efforts to Address Chronic Absenteeism

Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia are using a measure of chronic absenteeism in their accountability and improvement systems



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## Implementation Considerations

- Does your state have clear definitions of what counts as an absence that is used across schools for easier data comparison and analysis, including both in-school and out-of-school suspensions in the definition of what counts as an absence and a consistent definition of a partial-day absence?
- Does your state or district incorporate chronic absenteeism into early warning systems that also measure discipline incidents, course performance, and credit accumulation?
- Does your state or district ensure rates of absences are measured and patterns of chronic absence are addressed at all grade levels?
- Does your state or district share resources on how to connect schools with integrated student supports to reduce chronic absence?

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## How to Use this Information to Drive School Improvement

States and districts can better measure and help reduce chronic absenteeism by:

- Sponsoring professional development and forming communities of practice among educators to share resources on how to connect schools with reliable means of monitoring attendance.
- Creating schoolwide systems to reduce chronic absence that may include teacher/administrator home visits, mentors for students who are chronically absent, and school attendance committees to monitor student absences.
- Using attendance data to diagnose connections to discipline incidents, course performance, and credit accumulation to intervene early and create individualized plans for students who miss the most school.

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## Resources on Chronic Absenteeism

- [Portraits of Change: Aligning School and Community Resources to Reduce Chronic Absence](#) (Attendance Works and the Everyone Graduates Center). This brief provides a national and state analysis of schools facing high levels of chronic absence, discusses the implications for state and local action, and provides examples of initiatives to reduce chronic absence.
- [Chronic Absenteeism: A Key Indicator of Student Success](#) (Education Commission of the States). This guide highlights state and local efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism and provides policy recommendations to improve the efficacy of measuring attendance.
- [Addressing the Problem of Chronic Absenteeism: A Promising School-Community Partnership](#) (Communities In Schools). This brief presents examples of how school districts organize and use integrated student supports to improve student attendance.

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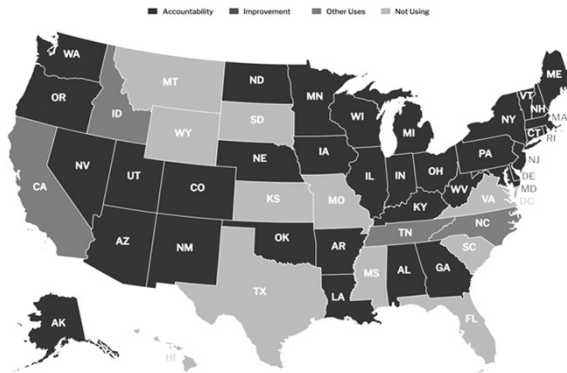
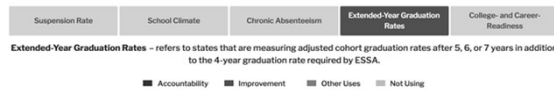
## Why Implementing an Extended-Year Graduation Rate Matters

- 1 in 5 students do not graduate within 4 years, with much higher proportions in historically underserved communities.
- Reasons students do not graduate include:
  - Pregnancy
  - Immigration
  - Employment
  - Incarceration
  - Health Issues
- Extended-year Graduation Rates encourage schools to keep working with struggling students to help them graduate in 5, 6, or 7 years.

### Extended-year Graduation Rates

## State Efforts to Implement Extended-Year Graduation Rates

Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia are using an extended-year graduation rate in their accountability and improvement systems



## Implementation Considerations

- Does your state or district utilize data systems to effectively track whether students are making the transition from middle school to high school?
- Does your state or district ensure that student enrollment in each school's 9th grade cohort is counted no later than October 1 of the school year?
- Does your district obtain the written documentation necessary to remove students from their graduating cohort?
- Does your state exclude students receiving a General Education Development (GED) certificate from graduation rate calculations, as required by ESSA?

## How to Use this Information to Drive School Improvement

States and districts can better implement extended-year graduation rates by:

- Focusing on supporting the needs of the whole student by including integrated student supports for all students.
- Using a community school approach that incorporates health care, mental health resources, social services, and after-school supports, mentoring and tutoring.
- Creating advisory systems and small schools or small learning communities within larger schools that allow students to be well known.
- Offering summer transition programs for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to successfully matriculate from middle to high school.

## Resources on Extended-Year Graduation Rates

[Preventable Failure Improvements in Long-Term Outcomes when High Schools Focused on the Ninth Grade Year](#) (The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research). This report describes additional strategies to support on-track graduation efforts during the pivotal transition from middle school to high school.

[2018 Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Raising High School Graduation Rates](#) (The Everyone Graduates Center). This is the most recent update of the Everyone Graduates Center's campaign to raise high school graduation rates.

[Community Schools: An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement](#) (Learning Policy Institute). This report provides guidance to school, district, and state leaders as they consider, propose, or implement a community school intervention in schools targeted for comprehensive support.

[Transforming the High School Experience: How New York City's New Small Schools Are Boosting Student Achievement and Graduation Rates](#) (MDRC). This report describes how a large system of small public high schools can be created and can markedly improve graduation prospects for many disadvantaged students.

[CASEL Program Guides: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). The CASEL Guide provides a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of social and emotional programs and shares best-practice guidelines for district and school teams on how to select and implement SEL programs. Finally, it offers recommendations for future priorities to advance SEL research and practice.



## Why Expanding Access to a College- and Career-Ready Curriculum Matters



Inequities in educational opportunities are perpetuated through differential access to a high-quality curriculum that focuses on critical thinking skills, and prepares students for college and careers.



## Impact on Historically Underserved Students

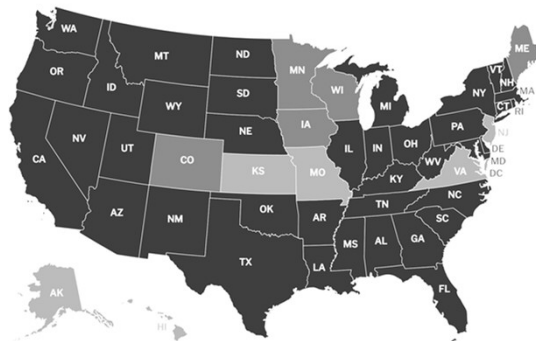
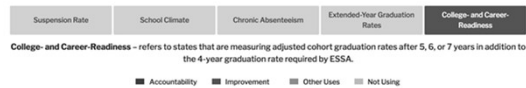
A lack of access to a strong College and Career Ready curriculum often places students at a disadvantage in postsecondary education and employment.

- Schools with high proportions of students of color are much less likely to offer advanced courses such as algebra II, calculus, chemistry, and biology.
- Across schools, students of color are underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and Gifted and Talented Programs—the kinds of settings in which higher order skills are most purposefully developed.
- Research has also found that schools serving African American, Latinx, and Native American students are “bottom heavy”—that is, they offer fewer academic courses or high-end career-technical options and more remedial and vocational courses training for low-status occupations.

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## State Efforts to Expand Access to a College- and Career-Ready Curriculum

Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia are using a measure of college and career readiness in their accountability and improvement systems



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## Implementation Considerations

- Does your state establish sufficient and stable funding streams to promote equitable access to college- and career-ready programs of study?
- Does your state address teacher shortages in fields essential to college- and career-ready courses and creating recruitment and retention strategies that ensure all students are taught by a qualified educator?
- Does your state base the denominator for each college and career readiness measure on all students when calculating college and career readiness outcomes?
- Does your state disaggregate and report progress on individual measures within a composite indicator that is based on multiple measures of college and career readiness?

## How to Use this Information to Drive School Improvement

### **States and districts can better expand access to a college- and career-ready curriculum by:**

- Providing professional development to help teachers design and use performance assessments, including projects, portfolios, and extended-performance tasks, that are encouraged under ESSA and allow students to apply what they are learning to real-world situations.
- Increasing support for programs such as early college or career academy initiatives that promote successful transitions to postsecondary education.
- Support educator pathways into high-needs fields through residency programs, grow your own models, and efforts to increase teachers licensed in these fields.



## Resources on College and Career Readiness

[Success at Every Step: How 23 Programs Support Youth on the Path to College and Beyond](#) (American Youth Policy Forum). This report is designed to help policymakers and practitioners learn about effective programs supporting college and career readiness. These programs help diverse youth to improve their academic performance, identify career aspirations, build employer-desired skills, plan for postsecondary education, and develop the personal resources necessary to achieve their goals.

[Building Early College Pathways to STEM Careers](#) (Jobs for the Future). This brief outlines how school and community leaders in Bridgeport, CT, partnered to prepare students in low-income communities for STEM careers through early college pathways.

[Personal Opportunity Plans](#) (Engaging Schools). This report describes how Personal Opportunity Plans (POPs) in grades 6–12 can foster students' college and career development.

[Paper Thin? Why All High School Diplomas Are Not Created Equal](#) (Alliance for Excellent Education). This brief evaluates how the different types of high school diplomas given out across the country prepare students to be college- and career-ready.

[Preparing 21st Century Citizens: The Role of Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning](#) (Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education). This brief describes how schools can create work-based education programs that blend real-world problems with the skills and knowledge to succeed in college and the workforce and explains how policymakers can support them.

[Using Dual Enrollment Policy to Improve College & Career Readiness: A Web Tool for Decision Makers](#) (Jobs for the Future). This brief and web tool analyze dual enrollment policies in all 50 states to determine each state's progress in creating conditions that support early college strategies for youth from low-income families. It identifies six model policy elements that define a new dual enrollment policy framework.

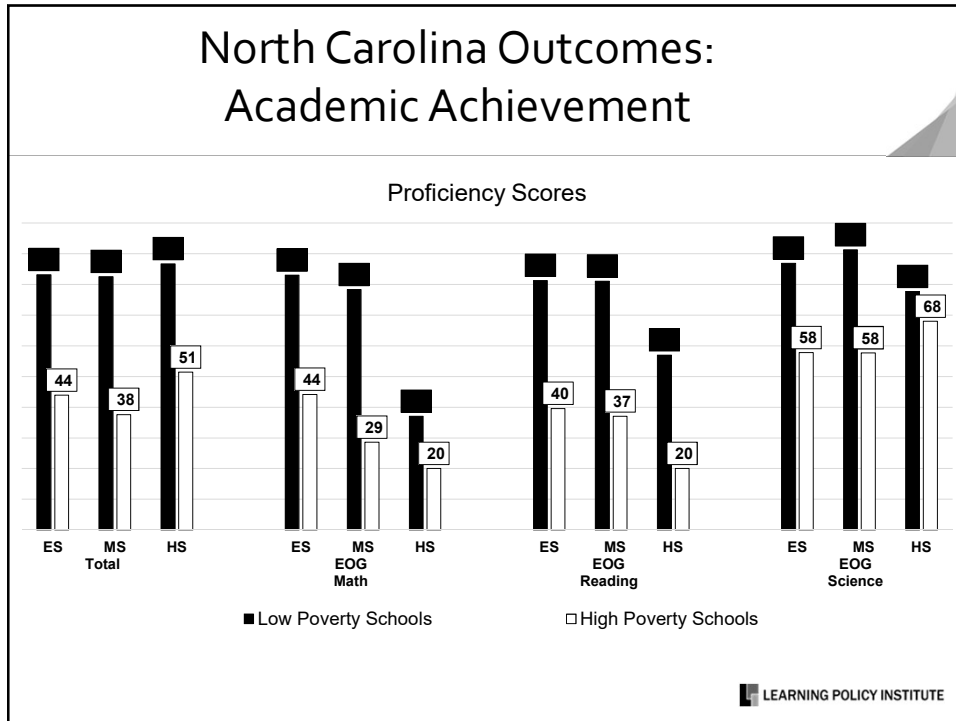
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## School Performance on Indicators: Measuring and Incorporating Status and Growth in Accountability Systems

### Research Finds that Student Growth is a Better Indicator of School Performance

- Research demonstrates that due to the strong negative relationship between achievement and poverty at the school level, focusing primarily on achievement to evaluate school performance biases the evaluation system against schools that serve large percentages of students from poverty and rewards schools with wealthy populations.
- Status measures do not show what the school has contributed to student learning, therefore growth measures should be a significant measure in evaluating schools.

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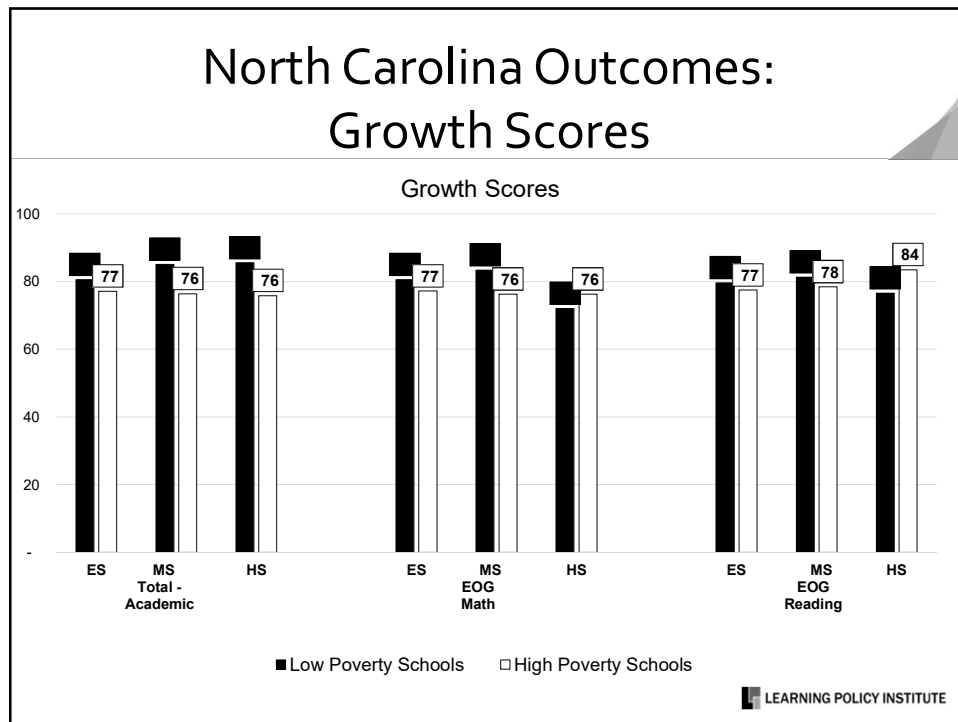


## Research Finds that Student Growth is a Better Indicator of School Performance

While it is important to measure achievement, a high-growth school's overall achievement level may remain relatively low since low-achieving students continually enter in lower grades and higher-achieving students graduate. Heavily weighting achievement fails to adequately recognize schools producing growth. High levels of growth over time lead to higher levels of achievement.

Schools need time to increase achievement and it is important to assess whether progress is being made using measures of growth in addition to status on each indicator.

Examining growth data provides a very different picture of whether learning is occurring at a school.



## Using Measures of Status and Growth to Drive Continuous Improvement

- North Carolina's system provides each school with a single summative score in the form of a letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F). This grade is based on indicator performance and is used to rank schools.
- There is no requirement under ESSA that states produce a "single summative score" in order to identify the lowest-performing 5% of schools or adopt an index or grading system.
- The state's accountability system should be designed to measure progress towards providing a sound basic education across all schools and identify the appropriate remedies.

## Research Finds that Using Multiple Measures More Accurately Assesses Schools

An analysis of schools within California's CORE districts found that dramatically different schools would be identified using a single summative score as compared to identification based on individual academic measures.

- For example, 14% of the state's schools fell into the bottom 5% on at least one indicator
- Of these schools, nearly three-quarters were not identified for intervention when the single summative score was used.

Important factors and data related to school performance were overlooked because they were buried underneath the single summative score – meaning that schools identified for improvement often did not have a clear understanding of where and how they should focus their attention.

In many cases, this resulted in students' and schools' needs being unidentified and unaddressed.

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## Alternative Approaches to a Single Summative Rating

A number of states are moving away from the use of a single summative score because it can mask areas of needed improvement.

Many states have adopted strategies for accountability that do not use a single summative score, instead looking at multiple indicators of school progress to make a determination.

For example, Vermont found that assigning a single summative score would overlook more low performing schools than the use of an alternative approach (aggregating the number of struggling areas).

The use of a single summative score, such as a matrix approach that identifies where schools fall in terms of performance and growth with respect to each indicator, and/or decision rules that result in school classifications based on the number of areas in which schools fail to meet a standard.

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- **Key Takeaways**

- Provide a comprehensive set of SBE opportunity and outcome measures that
- Significantly incorporate growth in addition to status
- Ensure that improvement across all indicators is monitored
- Ensure that the data provided is used to inform school improvement and funding allocation decisions

- **Discussion**

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