

AdvancED Source

CEO MESSAGE

Who is Accountable for Student Success?

Mark A. Elgart, Ed.D., President and CEO, AdvancED®

When discussing education today, it's difficult to escape the topic of accountability. Educators and legislators alike have perspectives and priorities regarding accountability – from how to change the current system, to teacher evaluations, to measuring student achievement and to who is accountable when a school fails to meet the educational needs of students.

What do we want from our future accountability systems? We certainly want them to result in improvement and effectiveness. We want accountability systems to use information and data, expand beyond a single test, be transparent and include monitoring. Also, accountability systems must include diagnostic review. Diagnostic review is a causal analysis that can highlight problems early and lead to targeted interventions. Diagnostic review is included in the key principles of next generation accountability proposed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and is part of the ESEA reauthorization bill passed by the Senate HELP committee in October 2011.

Most importantly, the accountability systems of today that focus on the institution and the teacher's effectiveness to improve student learning must transform to a learner-centric approach in the future. As students continue to expand and diversify their learning ecology to include multiple education providers, we must create an accountability system that measures, analyzes, and improves learning for every student in a customized and personalized manner. Current diagnostic review practices must move from the system and school level to the individual student level and provide a root cause analysis that informs and enables every provider to enact targeted strategies specific and unique to each learner. Our current accountability systems continue to challenge our ability to realize our desired expectations for student learning. However, with continued efforts to increase and improve our capacity to create and sustain an aligned accountability system that is learner-centric, we will meet the challenge of improving learning for every student.

This issue of *AdvancED Source*, with a theme of **Accountability Needed Today for Success Tomorrow**, explores many perspectives regarding accountability – from a high school principal, a state superintendent, a research organization, a district administrator and even a student. We have arrived at, as author Art Coleman, managing partner and co-founder of EducationCounsel, shares, “a pivotal moment of transition and transformation in education policy and practice.” You will find his article, *Key Trends and Implications for Elementary and Secondary Educators and Policy Makers*, on page 2.

Authors Dr. Ellen Behrstock-Sherratt and Dr. Sabrina Lane of the American Institutes of Research explore teacher effectiveness and evaluation in their article, *Strengthening Teacher Evaluation in the Age of Accountability*. Take a look at their measures of teacher effectiveness, found on page 3. While

private schools do not need to meet many of the same state requirements of public schools, they are accountable to those who elect to pay for their children's education. On page 5, Dr. Derek Keenan, vice president for academic affairs at the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), outlines the accountability challenges facing private schools in his article, *Reputation, Re-enrollment, Results*.

Kentucky Commissioner of Education Dr. Terry Holliday and Interim Associate Commissioner Susan Allred in their piece, *How States Can Meet the Challenge of College and Career Readiness*, share some of their latest work on state accountability systems. You'll find their article on page 6. Authors Dr. Sharon Riley Ordu, director of an early college high school and founder and CEO of ETL Consulting, and Dr. P. Augustine Ordu, a full professor and Chief Operating Officer and Managing Associate of ETL Consulting, explore the *Seven Levels of Accountability for Student Success* on page 7.

In *Surviving the New Age of Accountability* (page 8), Jacquelyn A. Jacobson, principal of Wickenburg High School, provides a humorous, and serious, look at the challenges facing building administrators as they implement new accountability requirements. On page 9, Matteson School District leaders, Dr. Blondean Davis and Dr. Brian Ali, examine who should be held accountable for student learning in their article, *Student Learning is our Work*.

AdvancED Source is fortunate to have received an article from Minnesota New Country School student, Ally Kroehler. In her piece, *Holding Students Accountable*, she asserts that students must be accountable for themselves and their future. You'll find her perspectives on page 10. Our issue wraps up with *Promoting and Supporting a Data-to-Action, Results-Oriented Culture within Durham Public Schools*. School system leaders, Dr. Brent Cooper and Dr. Terri Mozingo, along with Dr. Dustin Johnson, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at High Point University, describe Durham's new accountability approach and implementation.

With the focus on accountability only increasing, we appreciate our authors sharing their experiences and expertise as we explore **Accountability Needed Today for Success Tomorrow**.

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We want accountability systems to use information and data, expand beyond a single test, be transparent, and include monitoring.

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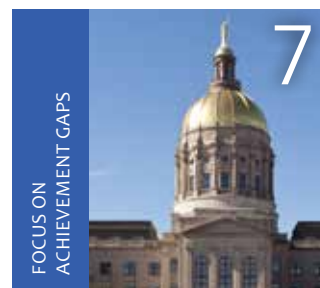
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Spring 2013 Issue
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A NEW EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY ERA

Key Trends and Implications for Elementary and Secondary Educators and Policy Makers

By Arthur L. Coleman

Accountability is a loaded term. Although it can mean many different things to different people, in the elementary and secondary context, the term has come to represent a set of expectations and obligations associated with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) – which has provided the overarching accountability regime in K-12 education for over a decade. Indeed, for most K-12 educators, in light of its long and somewhat tortured history, it is likely that NCLB is, in fact, among the first associations made when the topic of accountability surfaces. But that association is likely to change significantly in the next year or so – whether or not Congress and the President actually agree in 2013 on a reauthorization of that law with the establishment of a new set of federal guidelines in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. To best understand this lens on the future – and what it means for educators and policy makers – a brief history is in order.



High Standards Expectations

In the wake of a standards reform movement that galvanized among state and school system leaders in the 1980s and 1990s, the passage of the Improving America's Schools Act and the Goals 2000 Educate America Act (both enacted in 1994) embedded a meaningful and new national focus on high standards expectations for all students. Building on those foundations, the bipartisan support and ultimate passage of NCLB heralded an even greater continuation of focus on setting expectations and obligations high – with requirements that, among other things, required disaggregation of data in the reporting and accountability for school, school system and state performance toward high standards (set state-by-state), and transparency in reporting of those results. (The two features of the law that were, as a general rule, strongly applauded.) The limitations of education systems – with insufficiently developed state data systems, as well as assessment systems that at best could capture a summative snapshot of student performance by grade, year-to-year (without actually tracking student progress over time) – presented major challenges. One such challenge was significant limitations regarding the underlying validity of the data that were to inform judgments about performance and accountability, which corresponded with a less than robust picture of the meaningful steps that should then be taken to improve systems and yield better student learning and outcomes.

In short, the NCLB Act materially but imperfectly galvanized a focus on meaningful accountability measures associated with high standards expectations, setting the stage for what is, by any estimation, a pivotal moment of transition and transformation in education policy and practice.

Transition and Transformation

There are many dimensions of action affecting this moment in time – a renewed focus and emerging consensus regarding the kinds of learning outcomes essential for success in today's globally connected world; significant efforts to promote innovation affecting all facets of education, particularly regarding new teaching and learning strategies and opportunities; and a renewed focus on key elements of necessary systemic change, in which the roles of the federal government, the states, school systems and schools are better aligned and more coherently understood. These three dimensions are reflected in many key developments that have major consequences for educators and policy makers:

- In a remarkably short period of time, 45 states and the District of Columbia have come together around a more rigorous set of college and career-focused common state standards, reflecting a “ground up” effort to establish important baseline expectations associated with the knowledge and skills that are demanded in today's (and tomorrow's) workforce.
- A major shift from NCLB accountability is emerging on issues of testing and assessment – with a focus on a more sophisticated blend of summative and formative assessments as key foundations for improving teaching and learning, as well as on the capacity of state and school systems to track and monitor progress, by student, from year to year.
- Correspondingly, advances in the science of testing and assessment are allowing more robust uses of test and assessment results to serve as key foundations for promoting more robust diagnostic review of school and system performance, along with the establishment of better continuous improvement strategies within schools and school systems associated with that review.
- Technological advances are, at the same time, setting the stage for the transformation of student learning, which is increasingly personalized; reflective of a blend of teaching strategies and platforms, including online platforms; and centered both on knowledge and skills necessary to promote critical thinking, inquiry and exploration.
- Federal policy also has reflected much of this change, with the U.S. Department of Education providing options for states to seek waivers from some of the dated NCLB requirements (in light of delays in Congressional reauthorization of that law), in an effort to promote innovation toward satisfaction of the rigorous kinds of standards established by the common core state standards.



These developments and trends do not come without challenges. Key issues associated with how the federal government appropriately defines its role among the various actors (with an appropriate accountability focus that is neither too rigid or mechanical [ala NCLB] nor too amorphous to have real meaning) must be addressed over time. And, in a related vein, ensuring that all students – including low-income students, students with disabilities and English language learners – are fully and fairly included in all facets of reform efforts remains a central point of focus.

In the end, success in achieving education goals – at the local, state and national levels – will require enhanced and good faith efforts to communicate and strategize around the many remarkable changes taking place that are literally redefining the world of education today. Everyone has a role. And all voices should be heard at this important and unique moment in time. *

Arthur L. Coleman is a managing partner and co-founder of EducationCounsel LLC. Coleman has an extensive background in providing legal, policy, strategic planning and advocacy services to educators throughout the country. Prior to his current position, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights from June 1997 until January 2000, following his three-and-a-half year tenure as Senior Policy Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. Mr. Coleman is a 1984 honors graduate of Duke University School of Law and a 1981 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Virginia. He has served as an adjunct professor at two law schools and at one graduate school of education, and he has spoken widely and published extensively regarding legal and policy issues in education.

Strengthening Teacher Evaluation in the Age of Accountability

By Sabrina Laine, Ph.D. and Ellen Behrstock-Sherratt, Ph.D.

Teacher accountability in the United States is in a period of transformation. In July 2012, the 26th state received an Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Waiver, marking relief for more than half of the states from many of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. In exchange, these states promised to implement rigorous new teacher evaluation systems that, among other things, include measures of student learning growth. Similarly, transforming teacher evaluation was a consistent priority for the United States Department of Education through the award of grants such as Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund, and School Improvement Grants. To improve their eligibility to access federal funding, and to simultaneously achieve their school improvement goals, since 2009, 36 states plus Washington, DC, and hundreds of school districts have passed teacher evaluation reforms, and 33 states have additionally passed principal evaluation reforms. For many states and districts the question of how to measure student learning as one aspect of measuring teacher effectiveness – in ways that are accurate, amenable to teachers, and do-able for teachers whose grades or subject areas are not systematically tested – has consumed much of their time and resources the last few years.

A meaningful, accurate evaluation system achieves a number of important purposes. As in any field, evaluations provide those managing the organization a clearer sense of each employee's strengths and weaknesses so that decisions about promotion, professional development, assignment, and when necessary, dismissal can be made in a more thoughtful manner. In schools, there is an additional emphasis on the role of evaluations in providing detailed, constructive feedback to all teachers, including those that are considered generally effective already, with data that can inform continuous improvement in practice. It is now commonly understood that teacher effectiveness is the single most important school-level factor affecting student achievement – with principal effectiveness a close second. It is clear, therefore, that the continuous improvement of teacher and principal effectiveness must be an integral part of any efforts aimed at raising student achievement.

While improvements in educator evaluation are still evolving, the research and policy communities agree that a high quality teacher evaluation system includes several features. First, it assesses teacher effectiveness on multiple performance levels; that is, teachers are placed on a four or five point scale, as opposed to binary ratings that limit the evaluator to choosing between “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” High quality teacher evaluation systems also include multiple measures of effectiveness (see sidebar), and each of these measures must be carefully developed and tested for their validity (e.g., accuracy) and reliability (e.g., consistency). Evaluators must be rigorously trained on using the measures appropriately. Multiple evaluators should spend adequate amounts of time observing teachers on more than one occasion, comparing notes, and sharing detailed written feedback with teachers, while also coaching them to improve in areas of weakness.

Multiple Measures of Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher evaluations may include some combination of the following measures:

- **Classroom observations.** Used by evaluators to make consistent judgments of teachers' instructional practice, classroom observations are the most common measure of teacher effectiveness and vary widely in how they are conducted and what they assess. High quality classroom observation instruments are standards-based and contain well-specified rubrics that delineate consistent assessment criteria for each standard of practice. To be accurate, evaluators should be trained to ensure consistency in scoring.

- **Student growth on standardized tests.** Student growth on standardized tests refers to the test score change from one point in time to another point in time. The related concept of value-added measures, refer to student growth measures that includes a pre-test score and a post-test score as well as a number of other variables (e.g., poverty, special needs, etc.) about students that are outside of a teacher's control yet tend to affect students' academic growth.
- **Other student growth data.** Other student growth data includes information about the change in students' performance on some measure such as a teacher- or district-developed test over two or more points in time. It may also include growth in terms of behavior, musical performances, or portfolios of student work.
- **Instructional artifacts.** Instructional artifacts are used by evaluators to rate lesson plans, teacher assignments, teacher-created assessments, scoring rubrics, or student work on particular criteria, such as rigor, authenticity, intellectual demand, alignment to standards, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Evaluators typically use an evaluation tool or rubric to make judgments about the quality of student artifacts.
- **Teacher portfolios.** Portfolios are a collection of materials that exhibit evidence of exemplary teaching practice, school activities, and student progress. They are usually compiled by the teacher him or herself and may include teacher-created lesson or unit plans, descriptions of the classroom context, assignments, student work samples, videos of classroom instruction, notes from parents, and teachers' analyses of their students learning in relation to their instruction. Similar to portfolios, evidence binders often provide specific requirements for inclusion and require a final teacher led presentation of the work to an evaluation team.
- **Teacher self-assessments.** Self-assessments consist of surveys, instructional logs, or interviews in which teachers report on their work in the classroom, the extent to which they are meeting standards, and in some cases the impact of their practice. Self-assessments may include checklists, rating scales, rubrics, and may require teachers to indicate the frequency of particular practices.
- **Student surveys.** Student surveys are questionnaires that typically ask students to rate teachers on an extant-scale (e.g., from 1 to 5, where 1 = very effective, and 5 = not at all effective) regarding various aspects of teachers' practice (e.g., course content, usefulness of feedback, etc.) as well as how much students say they learned or the extent to which they were engaged.
- **Parent surveys.** Parent surveys are questionnaires that typically ask parents to rate teachers on an extant-scale (e.g., from 1 to 5, where 1 = very effective, and 5 = not at all effective) regarding various aspects of teachers' practice (e.g., course content, usefulness of feedback, quality of homework, quality of communication, etc.) as well as the extent to which they are satisfied with the teachers' instruction (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008).

The continuous improvement of teacher and principal effectiveness must be an integral part of any efforts aimed at raising student achievement.

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A number of reform-minded districts charted an early path implementing comprehensive changes to their evaluation systems. For example, in order to address concerns about the fairness of using student test scores to evaluate teachers, Hillsborough County Public Schools, in Tampa, Florida, decided early on to focus on the *growth* in test scores between two points in time rather than a static *achievement* measure captured only once a year. That way, teachers of special education or struggling students would not be at a disadvantage compared to classrooms with more gifted or high-performing students. The district adopted pre- and post-tests in each grade and subject, including over 600 assessments. Meanwhile, TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement, adopted by districts across the country, created a system of master teachers and mentor teachers to help alleviate some of the time burden on principals by providing full- or part-time release hours to conduct teacher evaluations; provide extensive feedback and instructional demonstrations; identify context-relevant, research-based instructional strategies; analyze student data; create school-wide academic achievement plans; and interact with parents. Many more examples of new state and district policies on teacher and principal evaluation are available at www.tqsource.org, all of which offer innovative ideas and lessons learned for the benefit of other education leaders around the country.

Nevertheless, creating more robust teacher and principal evaluation systems will not, in isolation, lead to significant improvements in educator quality. For instance, what if some teachers are not willing or not able to improve enough to fully meet students needs, or if there is not a ready supply of excellent teachers and principals to replace those who are consistently not meeting expectations? To ensure that all students receive a great education, education reformers must see these new and improved evaluation systems as the beginning and not the end of a larger, systemic set of initiatives to attract and retain educators. Teacher preparation, compensation, induction and support, strategic recruitment, and the professional environment in schools must all be enhanced. For example, assessing teacher effectiveness should occur through annual evaluations, but also at the time of hiring and as part of the responsibility of the preparation programs that matriculated the new teachers in the first place.

Another critical aspect of redesigning evaluation systems is how to meaningfully involve teachers in the process. Engaging teachers, as well as principals, is essential in order to create evaluations that are well-designed, implemented with fidelity, and sustainable for the long-term. Unfortunately, genuinely engaging teachers in the evaluation redesign process is perhaps the most neglected aspect of the reform process to-date. But resources such as *Everyone at the Table: Engaging Teachers in Evaluation Reform* (www.EveryoneAtTheTable.org) have been developed to assist school systems with teacher engagement (see box).



Closing persistent achievement gaps as well as raising achievement for all students will simply not be possible without recruiting and retaining sufficient teachers of the highest quality for every classroom.

Everyone at the Table: Engaging Teachers in Evaluation Reform



Everyone at the Table: Engaging Teachers in Evaluation Reform is an initiative of American Institutes for Research and Public Agenda, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This free online resource center provides an easy-to-use model for widespread teacher-led conversations on evaluation reform that are constructive and solutions-oriented, using structured conversation tools and activities, with the end goal of increasing teacher input into the policies that are developed. It includes:

- A two-minute video that captures the importance and enthusiasm of education leaders around the country for broader, more genuine involvement of teachers in evaluation reform (www.everyoneatthetable.org/leadersVideo.php)
- An eight-minute teacher discussion-starter video (www.everyoneatthetable.org/gtt_video.php) that gives teachers the chance to think and talk about the pros and cons of different kinds of evaluation systems.
- Materials such as moderator's guides, PowerPoint presentations, and discussion summary templates to help leaders organize discussions with teachers and bring their voices to the table.

Everyone at the Table has been used with success in Los Angeles, Detroit, Washington state, and elsewhere. To read their stories and learn more about this innovative approach to teacher engagement around evaluation, visit www.everyoneatthetable.org.

Closing persistent achievement gaps as well as raising achievement for all students will simply not be possible without recruiting and retaining sufficient teachers of the highest quality for every classroom. An effective accountability system must be anchored in a teacher evaluation system that is informed by research and best practice and includes teacher voice in the design and implementation. Of course, transforming teacher accountability systems as one part of a comprehensive approach to educator talent management and development requires thoughtful planning, prioritizing, and resource allocation. Based on financial data collected through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's initiative to build comprehensive educator evaluation systems, Harvard professor Tom Kane estimates that done well, a high quality teacher evaluation system is likely to consume two percent of a school district's budget. Given the potential for new evaluation systems to produce data that can truly inform continuous improvements in teacher practice, and feed into an aligned system of educator talent management strategies that attract and retain greater numbers of excellent teachers—the cost may well be worth the investment. *

Sabrina W. M. Laine, Ph.D., is Vice President, Education Human Development and the Workforce at the American Institutes for Research (AIR). She oversees numerous efforts to contribute to policy research and resource development related to every aspect of managing and supporting educator talent including recruitment, compensation, evaluation, distribution and professional development. Dr. Laine served as the Director of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and is the primary author of the book, *Improving Teacher Quality: A Guide for Education Leaders*, published by Jossey-Bass in 2011. Dr. Laine earned her doctorate in educational leadership and policy studies from Indiana University.

Ellen Behrstock-Sherratt, Ph.D., is a researcher at AIR where she leads the organization's compensation reform and educator talent management initiatives. Dr. Sherratt has presented on teacher incentives, Generation Y teachers, human capital management, and equitable teacher distribution and is co-author of the book *Improving Teacher Quality: A Guide for Education Leaders*. Dr. Sherratt earned her doctoral degree in education from the University of Oxford.

SUBMIT YOUR STORIES

Digital Learning

As we have seen the interest in and use of digital learning grow, there is an increasing need for educators, legislators, parents and students to understand it better. Whether you call it online learning, distance education, or e-learning, the expansion of courses available online is undeniable. Digital learning offers personalized, learner-centered experiences that can offer students opportunities far beyond the walls of a school building.

The spring 2013 issue of *AdvancED Source* will explore how traditional schools will change with the expansion of digital learning; what educators, parents and students should know about providers of digital learning; how online educational programs could, and should, be regulated; and the benefits and limitations of digital learning courses.

Educational leaders, practitioners and authors are encouraged to submit articles to share their thoughts on **Digital Learning**.

AdvancED Source publishes articles on educational strategies and practices supporting educational quality. Articles should contain useful information and techniques for practitioners serving students Pre-K through grade 12. Articles based on original research also are welcome.

Articles are now being accepted for the spring 2013 issue. Submissions should be between 900-1500 words and submitted electronically in Microsoft Word® to joliver@advanc-ed.org by February 1, 2013. View *AdvancED Source* editorial guidelines at <http://www.advanc-ed.org/advanc-ed-source>. For additional information, please contact Jennifer Oliver at the e-mail above or 888.41ED NOW, ext. 5547.



Reputation, Re-enrollment, Results

By Derek J. Keenan, Ed.D.

The late Stephen M. R. Covey, in his 2006 book *The Speed of Trust*, notes that in a high-trust ethos, everything is more efficient. Covey builds this theme throughout the book with the idea that leaders of organizations have the power, the responsibility and the ability to engender high trust. Covey defines trust in its simplest form as confidence (p. 5). He further notes that there are five waves of trust: self-trust, relationship trust, organizational trust, market trust and societal trust (pp. 34-35). Private schools must have high trust to continue to exist.



Fostering Accountability

Trust is integral to an environment where there is an accountability norm. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner in *The Leadership Challenge* propose that it is a crucial task of leadership to foster an environment of accountability. They note, "Individual accountability is a critical element of every collaborative effort," and "leaders know that part of their job is to set up conditions that enable each and every team member to feel a sense of ownership for the whole job" (2007, p. 258). Schools, at least the effective ones, operate as high-trust organizations and foster individual and collective accountability that is crucial to sustaining credibility.

In the private school world, parents choose a school to educate their children. Parents choose a private school for a variety of reasons, but in essence it is about the best school, given their goals for their children. These schools are sectarian or nonsectarian, parochial or independent, proprietary or not-for-profit, but in all cases there is a tuition cost to the parents. This is a highly significant accountability factor for the private school sector. Parents have an annual opportunity to rethink the "value proposition" for the education that their children are receiving.

At a meeting (in May 2012) of the California Private School Organization colloquium on private school accountability, the following was noted in the program background document:

In truth, nowhere is educational accountability greater than in America's K-12 private schools, where every student is enrolled by choice, where a free alternative exists just down the street or around the corner in the form of the local public school, and where schools that fail, cease to exist. Every private school leader is cognizant of these realities. But, in today's climate, private school leaders must be equipped to answer questions from an ever-more-demanding public concerning curriculum, personnel and assessment, with clarity, sophistication and conviction. (p. 1)

Managing Enrollment

According to an annual survey of over 3,000 U.S. member schools in the Association of Christian Schools International, tuition accounts for about 80 percent of school income. Hence, enrollment is critical to the economic life and sustainability of private schools. This stakeholder accountability is part of the daily life of private schooling. It creates an accountability tension that wise school leaders distribute across the scope of the school. Everyone has an enrollment management position. The reasons that parents choose a private school vary greatly as do the types of private schools that they choose. In the religious school community, it is often a particular theological tradition or faith emphasis that attracts parents. In other cases the choice is based on a school's reputation for academic quality, or issues of convenience or safety. There is little doubt, given the state of the U.S. economy in the last few years, that the price point of school tuition is a factor in private school choice. Private school leaders face the daunting task of meeting the expectations that ripple out from these choices while also seeking to build enrollment around the mission, culture, vision and ethos of independent schools.

The school's reputation is a critical drawing factor in attracting mission-appropriate families. This is the marketing metric for school sustainability. Schools develop a reputation for quality by consistently delivering on the promises that they make in their advertising: cultivating a culture that is attractive from the first moment a prospective family steps foot on the campus and by demonstrating each day that the school is very good at caring for, well educating and inspiring children. Schools must build an increasingly positive reputation as an organization that delivers. One of the reputation building blocks is the quality of the school's graduates and their reflections on the value of their past school experience. Schools are wise to keep longitudinal data on both students and graduates. The data can be compared to studies of outcomes by similar types of schools.



Meeting Stakeholder Expectations

The *2011 Cardus Education Survey* (www.carduseducationsurvey.com) looked at the motivations for private and religious Catholic and Protestant education in North America (in the United States and Canada) and if those motivations align with graduate outcomes. The study compared Catholic and Protestant schools with each other and with public schools. Cardus interviewed religious schools' graduates between the ages of 24 and 39 and measured them across three outcomes: spiritual formation, cultural engagement and academic development. The "Executive Summary" of the study notes:

In many cases, the difference in outcomes between Catholic and Protestant Christian schools is striking. Catholic schools provide superior academic outcomes, an experience that translates into graduates' enrollment in more prestigious colleges and universities, more advanced degrees, and higher household income. In Catholic schools, administrators put a higher value on university than their Protestant Christian peers, and Catholic schools' academic programs consist of more rigorous course offerings across the board....

...Compared to their public school, Catholic school, and non-religious private school peers, Protestant Christian school graduates have been found to be uniquely compliant, generous individuals who stabilize their communities by their uncommon and distinctive commitment to their families, their churches and their communities, and by their unique hope and optimism about their lives and the future. (p. 13)

This study indicates, in segmented fashion, a level of accountability that is fairly unique to the private school as part of the education universe. Parents come with checkbook in hand and enroll their children in the school with a particular set of expectations, and in the high-expectations and low-loyalty culture of today, unmet expectations result in disenrollment, and often in short order. Parents have expectations of the school that are academic, social, perhaps religious and relational. The school has its mission, but student enrollment, particularly initial enrollment, may only be tangentially related to that mission. An accountability tension exists for private school leadership among the competing expectations of enrolling families and the organization's ability to maintain a missional emphasis while substantially meeting a variety of stakeholder demands.

While results that are missional are important to all schools, parents are primarily focused on the core schooling aspects of child development and academic achievement. Whether the school has a maturational, sociological or theological philosophy, the parents are strongly interested in the child's personal well-being at school. These relational components are critical for the child and to the parents, and they are a key index of whether the family remains a school constituent. Private schools measure this by re-enrollment data, a metric of the percentage of students enrolled the previous year who return to the school. In the accreditation process by the Association of Christian Schools International, the school profile is expected to demonstrate an average re-enrollment that is about the 90 percent level.



The academic expectations of enrolling private school families are significant. These expectations seem to parallel upward with the cost of tuition. These expectations include the scope (width) of the program in both the curricular and co-curricular areas and the quality (depth) of the instruction, the instructor and the results. Enrolling families want to know the results the school produces on standardized tests as well as College Board or American College Testing scores. The list of colleges where students gain admission is another selecting metric for private schools. Parents want data on how many students get into their first choice of schools, and they want to know what the ranking is for those colleges and universities.

The accountability metrics of reputation, re-enrollment and results are in constant play in every private school. These metrics provide a daily tension to be managed by private school leaders. They are a reality that serves both the general public and private schools well, sometimes painfully well. *

Derek Keenan Ed.D. is the vice president for academic affairs at the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), in Colorado Springs, CO. In this position, which he has held for the past 16 years, Dr. Keenan oversees the programs of accreditation, educator certification, standardized testing, and higher education. He has authored and edited several volumes on school leadership and board governance and is the editor of *Christian School Education* magazine.

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How States Can Meet the Challenge of College and Career Readiness

By Terry Holliday, Ph.D. and Susan Allred

It seems simple enough. All states need to do to meet the challenge of college and career readiness for all students is to align all the systems that support the goal. After all, systems alignment is a business principle that has been recognized as effective for decades. Schools should be able to do that. Shouldn't we?



Continuous Improvement Approach

In Kentucky, the process of systems alignment has been very difficult and is still ongoing; however, there were several crucial steps on the journey that we will describe in this article. The steps are modeled after a continuous improvement approach of defining customer requirements, analyzing current performance, leadership setting a vision and specific goals to meet customer requirements, implementing an action plan and processes to reach the goals, and publicly reporting progress toward the goals.

The customer requirements were defined by the Kentucky General Assembly with legislation passed in 2009. The legislation required the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) to work collaboratively to increase the percentage of high school graduates who are college- and career- ready. The legislation required adoption of academic standards in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies that were nationally and internationally benchmarked. Additionally, the legislation required new assessments aligned to the standards, an accountability model based on the standards, and professional development and support for educators who were charged with implementing the standards and assessments.

The legislation led the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) to adopt a strategic plan called *Unbridled Learning*. This plan established clear priorities for Next-Generation Learning, Next-Generation Professionals, Next-Generation Support Systems and Next-Generation Schools and Districts. The plan established SMART goals for each of the priorities.

One of the SMART goals for Next-Generation Learning is that Kentucky will improve the college and career readiness rate from 34 percent in 2010 to 67 percent in 2015. The partnership between KDE and CPE led to clear measures for this goal. All higher education institutions in Kentucky agreed to benchmark scores for the ACT and COMPASS® assessments that would allow high school graduates to enter a credit-bearing course. The KBE added measures for career readiness that include academic measures (ACT, COMPASS®, WorkKeys® and a state-developed math placement exam, KYOTE) and technical measures (occupational testing and national industry certification).



Actions to Meet Goals

Perhaps the most challenging part of a continuous improvement system is the translation of the goals into specific actions and processes at each level of the system. The delivery chain from KDE to school systems to schools to teachers and classrooms to students and parents had to be aligned to the state goals, and the actions at each level had to lead to improved performance. KDE worked closely with the Education Delivery Institute to define annual targets for every school system and school in Kentucky that became the annual targets for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability waiver and specific strategies that would enable every system and school to reach the annual targets.

The next part of the challenge was to have a system that supported schools and school systems in translating state goals, annual targets and strategies into specific actions at the system, school, classroom and student levels. KDE partnered with AdvancED to implement a statewide consolidated school and system improvement

process that is data-driven and focused on the improvement of student achievement and organizational effectiveness, which meets the requirements for major state and federal programs and priorities while being aligned to AdvancED accreditation requirements. The initial implementation and deployment of the system to support this process through AdvancED's ASSIST™ (Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools), began in the fall of 2012.



Support for Educators

The final piece of the continuous improvement system is the support for schools and classroom teachers with key processes aligned to the goals and strategies of the state strategic plan. Connecting and aligning school systems and school actions to the Kentucky Board of Education goals in order to get the work done will be accomplished through the expectation that each school and school system will construct their comprehensive system and school improvement plans using the ASSIST tool. Through using common needs assessments and diagnostics available through ASSIST as well as Kentucky-specific instruments like *The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle*, a parent engagement analysis rubric, schools will develop profiles, write executive summaries and set goals aligned with Kentucky Board of Education goals. In addition, the activities align with those identified as best practice in the Kentucky Delivery Plans at the state level.

In addition to ASSIST, with support from the Race to the Top award, Kentucky partnered with SchoolNet and Pearson to develop the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System (CIITS). This system provides educators with 24/7 access to the standards in student-friendly language, instructional resources aligned to the standards, formative assessments, professional development aligned to the standards, and a teacher effectiveness/evaluation system aligned to the standards and student learning outcomes.

The Kentucky goal of increasing the percentage of students who graduate with the skills needed for college and career readiness is important to our students, their families and the economic vitality of the state. We are well on our way to reaching that goal based on the first two years of data. A key lesson learned is that a continuous improvement approach takes many partners working together to reach common goals. *

Terry Holliday, Ph.D., has served as Kentucky Commission of Education since 2009. Prior to that, Dr. Holliday served as superintendent of the more than 20,000-student Iredell-Statesville school district from 2002 until 2009. Under his leadership, the Iredell-Statesville school district received the 2008 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Holliday's previous experience includes serving as superintendent, associate superintendent, director of accountability, principal, assistant principal, director of instrumental music and band director in North Carolina and South Carolina. In December 2010, Dr. Holliday was named to the board of directors for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) for 2010-11. In September 2011, Dr. Holliday was appointed to serve a four-year term on the National Assessment Governing Board. The board sets policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation's Report Card. He earned a bachelor's degree from Furman University; a master's degree and education specialist degree from Winthrop University; and a doctorate from the University of South Carolina.

Susan Allred is the Interim Associate Commissioner for the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Next-Generation Schools and Districts. Her focus is on comprehensive school and district plans aligned with Kentucky Board of Education goals, including alignment of all Federal Programs, alternatives, virtual, safe schools and school improvement grant processes at the state level. Allred has 20 years of experience as a classroom teacher and more than 16 years of experience as a building and district administrator. She earned her Bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina, Charlotte; her Master's of Arts from Gardner-Webb University; and her Ed.S. in Educational Leadership and Superintendency from Appalachian State University.



Perhaps the most challenging part of a continuous improvement system is the translation of the goals into specific actions and processes at each level of the system.

Seven Levels of Accountability for Student Success

By Sharon Riley Ordu, Ed.D. and P. Augustine Ordu, Ph.D.

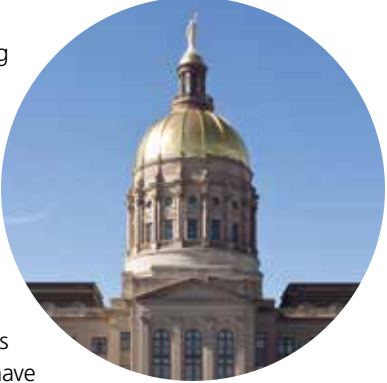
With No Child Left Behind (NCLB) off the table for at least 32 states in the U.S., accountability measures will be left to states and local school systems. NCLB has been clear about closing achievement gaps between groups of students considered at risk. To ensure that there is an ongoing focus on school improvement, accountability should continue to be rigorous and focused on achievement gaps along with whole school improvement.

Clear accountability systems have to be in place at seven different levels to ensure student success now and in the future. Goals, beliefs, values, visions and actions must be aligned similar to what one may find in a balanced scorecard. If these things are not operating in tandem, then the system may be doomed to fail.

The seven levels of accountability for student success are: 1) state; 2) school system; 3) school; 4) principal; 5) teachers; 6) parents; and 7) students.

LEVEL 1 **STATE**

All states should have a strong plan in place to measure accountability. Out of the 32 states approved for No Child Left Behind waivers, eight states have a conditional waiver, meaning they have not yet satisfied the Obama administration's requirements for a new principal/teacher evaluation system, incorporation of College and Career Readiness Standards and other stipulations. If these states are granted waivers, it is imperative that they have a plan in place so that all educators, parents, students and other stakeholders understand how schools will be monitored and what criteria will be used to determine school improvement.



Many of the states that have received No Child Left Behind waivers have developed impressive accountability plans.

According to the Kentucky Department of Education, their new accountability model is a more robust – next generation model that holds all schools and school systems accountable for improving student performance and creates four performance classifications that determine consequences and guide interventions and supports. School and system classifications are based on the following measures: 1) Achievement (Content Areas are reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing.); 2) Gap (percentage of proficient and distinguished) for the Non-Duplicated Gap Group for all five content areas; 3) Growth in reading and mathematics (percentage of students at typical or higher levels of growth); 4) College Readiness as measured by the percentage of students meeting benchmarks in three content areas on EXPLORE at middle school; 5) College/Career-Readiness Rate as measured by ACT benchmarks, college placement tests and career measures and 6) Graduation Rate.

LEVEL 2 **SCHOOL SYSTEM**


For school systems located in states where NCLB is still active, the accountability standards remain the same: required scores in key subject areas, test participation rates at 95 percent, attendance, graduation rates and adequate performance of special populations such as disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. What will be the accountability of school systems in states with waivers? The measures should certainly be well aligned to the state accountability plan components that we monitor and hold systems accountable for. In many cases, the new accountability measures growth over a period of time. Superintendents, boards of education and school system leaders will need to be visionary, progressive thinkers who are well versed about what is happening around the country and how to keep their school system on the cutting-edge of transformation.

A strong strategic plan that communicates the school system vision, mission, goals, beliefs, values and objectives should be transparent for all to see. The metrics embedded in it should communicate what the system is holding itself accountable for. There has to be a whole school system focus on building a culture of continuous improvement.

Curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional learning are critical success indicators for school systems. All levels of system operation have to link back to improvement of student achievement. High expectations must be in place for school system leaders, principals, teachers, students and their parents.

LEVEL 3 **SCHOOL**

An important question for a school to ask: "How do we know if our students are successful and what actions will we take if they are not?" Schools with an answer to this question and an accountability plan in place will have the greatest level of success. Generally, the school improvement plan is the accountability plan for the school. It outlines the same components one would find in a school system strategic plan; it is clear about the actions that will take place to address the question posed earlier.



There should be an action plan for improving each content area based on current school realities or baseline data from the most recent school assessments; a professional development plan aligned to the action plans; a technology plan; a plan for improving student attendance and parent involvement; and a plan that outlines how data will be utilized, analyzed and interpreted.

Ensuring student success in schools means holding teachers and other staff accountable for quality work directly impacting student achievement. Identification of root causes for lack of student success and aggressive interventions to address areas of weakness must be implemented. Use of research-based practices in all key areas of instruction, leadership and school operation should be evident in schools aiming for high levels of student success. Innovation and creativity are not only encouraged but celebrated.

LEVEL 4 **PRINCIPAL**

It is often said that principals must be strong instructional leaders. That is only part of what principals should know and be able to do. They also must be change agents, capable of dealing with vast ambiguities; human relations gurus; school culture shapers; savvy budget administrators; and outstanding performance managers. If principals are knowledgeable, courageous and willing to hold everyone accountable for keeping their students at the center of everything they do, success is bound to follow.

An effective principal is needed in every school building of a school system striving for excellence in education. These principals understand the complexity of their position, perform duties and responsibilities at a high level, and are able to multi-task, fitting all of the interconnected pieces of school life together for the good of their students. They are results-driven and accept no excuses from anyone. Success is the only option and mediocrity is simply not acceptable in a school run by a strong leader.

Many states have new leader accountability instruments that will be used to evaluate system and building level leaders. Principals operating at the proficient to exemplary level of these accountability systems will have the most positive impact on student achievement.

LEVEL 5 **TEACHERS**

Research is clear about the damage an ineffective teacher can do. It can take years of instruction with an effective teacher to turn that damage around. Schools and school systems will need a laser-like focus on building the capacity of teachers through strong induction programs, job-embedded professional learning, support for implementation of the new Common Core Performance Standards with accompanying assessments and teacher evaluation programs linked to student achievement outcomes. Teaching children at a high level of proficiency should be the core work of every teacher.

All teachers should continue to be highly qualified to teach the subjects and grade levels they are assigned. Use of varied instructional strategies, effective assessment techniques, data utilization and integration of technology are a given for teachers who want their students to be successful. Teachers should be held accountable; however, their success begins with holding students accountable for learning what is taught.

LEVEL 6 **PARENTS**


The outside curriculum of children does matter. This curriculum has to do with how they spend their time away from school, what they value, the support systems they have in place and how parents involve themselves in the school. What is learned in schools can be easily unlearned if not sufficiently enforced at home, in the community, ingrained in character and properly supported.

Parents need the requisite skills to help their children succeed in school. The local school and school systems should provide these skills through parent education workshops, parent involvement meetings, adult education classes and engagement in volunteerism. The Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets is a good starting point, along with the six types of parent involvement established by Joyce Epstein.

The chances of children being successful increase when their parents are fully vested in the school community; capable of monitoring school work; communicating effectively with teachers; and able to identify resources to help with social, emotional, health issues and other impediments to school success.

LEVEL 7 **STUDENTS**

Students must be taught to be responsible and take ownership for their education. Personalized learning environments are significant when it comes to establishing schools where students can thrive and be successful. Working with teachers who understand the importance of building relationships cannot be overemphasized. We must remain steadfast in our mission to prepare 21st century students in our country to compete in a global economy. Failing to do so will be detrimental to not only the individual child, but to our future as a nation. *



Sharon Riley Ordu is director of an early college high school and a practitioner with more than 20 years of experience in the field of education. Dr. Ordu has served as a middle school principal, high school principal, central office administrator, consultant and professor. She is the recipient of a Phi Delta Kappa Educational Excellence Award, has led Title I schools with challenging populations to earn awards from *US News & World Reports*, the International Center for Leadership in Education, and her schools have been recognized at the state and local level for outstanding student achievement. She is the founder and CEO of ETL (Excellence in Teaching, Learning & Leadership) Consulting.

P. Augustine Ordu is a full professor and Chief Operating Officer and Managing Associate of ETL Consulting. He has presented at many local, national and international conferences on a variety of topics such as educational excellence, student engagement leadership, healthcare administration, management and research. Dr. Ordu is the 2009 recipient of the Walden University Distinguished Alumni Award and was honored by Career Education Corporation for Outstanding Academic Leadership and Student Success. He has been practicing in the field of healthcare and education for over 25 years.

Surviving the New Age of Accountability

By Jacquelyn A. Jacobson

The first day of school for the Wickenburg Unified School District was August 8th – August 8th at 8:00 a.m., to be specific. At precisely 8:10 a.m., during a record heat wave in Arizona, the air conditioning units in Wickenburg High School went down. On the same day, we enrolled 100 more students than anticipated, and class sizes were nearing 40. The heat caused the girls to break the dress code, the milk to spoil in the cafeteria coolers, and the copy machines to overheat. This also was the day that Wickenburg High School began the implementation of a new core curriculum designed to increase the rigor in all courses. We had planned for a year; received over \$500,000 in grant funding; and purchased iPads, textbooks and supplemental instructional supplies. We had trained teachers, written pacing calendars, unwrapped standards and created lesson plans of which we were extraordinarily proud. And, on this – the first day of school - the only focus we had was the 116 degree temperature that was creating 90 degree classrooms. Such is the life of a principal.

Wickenburg High School is a small rural school in Wickenburg, Arizona. Our school is located approximately 50 miles northwest of Phoenix and has a student population of 750. The attendance area for the school is 1000 square miles and draws from five feeder elementary school systems. Fifty percent of the freshman class is “home-grown” from the Wickenburg Unified School District’s elementary schools. The remaining 50 percent arrive at our door from the surrounding, even more remote, attendance areas. As a rural school, Wickenburg High School has a difficult time attracting and retaining teachers and often must resort to using long term substitutes when highly qualified and appropriately certified teachers cannot be found. Despite these challenges, the Wickenburg Unified School District is ranked 15th in the state in academic achievement, as determined by state assessment results, and is often cited as a model for the implementation of national initiatives.

We find ourselves on the cutting edge of these national initiatives by maintaining a laser-like focus on the destination of moving every student to the next academic level. We take accountability very seriously. Accountability, by definition, is accepting responsibility for someone or something. Educational accountability, while an ever-changing moving target, requires school leaders to accept their responsibility to society, to parents and to our students. It is my job, as a school leader, to anticipate the changes and ensure that the academic culture of my school thrives in this new environment. There never has been a time in education where the stakes are higher and the accountability so demanding. As the public eye continues to focus on principals and their ability to deliver results, I find myself responding to those challenges in the following ways.



Construct a Solid Road

The road to student achievement is paved by effective school system leadership, by strong governance and leadership. The Wickenburg Unified School District is fortunate to have a superintendent with a clear focus and a Governing Board that understands the role it plays. Dr. Howard Carlson has created a path for us to follow that leaves no room for misinterpretation, and the Governing Board, led by Board President Joe Maglio, supports us every step of the way. The focus statement of the Wickenburg Unified School District is: “We are creating A+ schools with a laser-like focus on the Essential Elements of Instruction and moving each student to the next academic level.” We have a specific framework for the improvement of student learning. We are expected to maintain constant alignment with this focus and vision. The road is paved, and the lanes are clearly marked. Deviation from this road is unacceptable, and the system and building-level leadership maintains check points of calibration along the way. Without the absolute and unyielding commitment to this purpose and direction, it is not possible to prepare a system or a school for the demands of accountability. Once the road is built, it then becomes the responsibility of each principal to get behind the wheel and reach the destination.



Anticipate the Curves and Embrace Innovation

As the Common Core Standards were adopted in the state of Arizona, and around the nation, it became clear that multiple changes in accountability were just around the corner. The rigor was unmistakably increasing and intensifying. Teachers now would be held accountable for effective instruction through new evaluation systems intended to measure not only the effectiveness of instructional delivery, but the academic progress of each student in a teacher’s classroom. Students now would be assessed on that increased rigor. Wickenburg High School anticipated this momentous change in accountability and made a conscious decision to stay ahead of the curve.

In 2011, Wickenburg High School joined the national movement “Excellence for All,” led by Marc Tucker and the National Center on Education and the Economy. Titled “Move on When Ready” in the state of Arizona, and under the guidance of the Center for the Future of Arizona, this initiative provides a new pathway for students through the administration of Board Exams in all core content areas and allows students the option of moving to Community College after the sophomore year if all exams are successfully completed. It is a system designed to break the boundaries of seat time and simple accumulation of credits. It is an innovative approach to creating high rigor curriculum and schools that are competitive in the international arena. It is a system that will ensure our students are college and career ready.

With the goal of increased rigor, Wickenburg adopted the ACT Quality Core curriculum, fully aligned with the Common Core Standards, and we spent a year preparing to implement the new curriculum in 2012-2013. We were fortunate to receive more than \$500,000 in private foundation funding to assist in the implementation, which includes paying for Community College tuition for those moving on; funding the ACT Explore, Plan and ACT tests; and upgrading classroom technology. As the new state assessments are created and items released, it has become apparent that we made a wise decision. The language of test items released by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) mirrors the depth of knowledge found in assessment questions of the ACT Quality Core exams. Our teachers are beginning to deliver instruction differently and at a higher level. As a principal, I have found myself providing more specific and effective feedback for the teachers as I spend time in the classrooms. By anticipating this change in accountability, Wickenburg High School finds itself ahead of the curve and well on the way to reaching the final destination.



Stay in the Lane

The final destination has been determined by a visionary school system leadership. The road has been established. The landmarks on the educational journey have been anticipated on the map of accountability. Fortunately, the GPS coordinates for students, teachers and administrators of the Wickenburg Unified School District have been calculated with precision. All that remains is for school leaders to stay in the lane and remain focused on increased student achievement. It is only with such purpose and intent that we meet the challenges of accountability. *

Jacquelyn A. Jacobson has served as principal of Wickenburg High School since 2007. During her tenure, she has developed a national partnership with the National Center for Education and the Economy and participated in the Excellence for All initiative and a state-wide partnership with the Center for the Future of Arizona and participated in Move on When Ready initiative. Additionally, she has received more than \$1 million in funding for educational initiative, including \$500,000 in local foundation grant money to implement Move on When Ready Board Examination initiative. Jacobson earned a Bachelor of Arts from Furman University and Masters of both Education and Social Work from Arizona State University.

In Matteson School District 162, located in the south suburbs of Chicago, we have witnessed a dramatic improvement in student learning over the past 10 years. It is an incredible story about accountability and student success.

EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Student Learning is our Work

By Blondean Y. Davis, Ed.D., and Brian Ali, Ed.D.

For some time now, school leaders have come under fire to demonstrate greater accountability for the learning of all students. While there are pockets of educational excellence that exist, the preponderance of public schools are considered underperforming and that is unacceptable. Who is accountable for student learning?



The Meaning of Accountability

What is educational accountability? In the context of reform and restructuring, accountability has different meanings for various stakeholder groups, i.e., political leaders, education officials, teachers, parents, community and business leaders and the general public. Far too often, the concept of accountability is inextricably linked to high stakes testing of students. Unfortunately, based on the results of a single test, huge numbers of schools are declared failures, while much lesser numbers are considered high performing. Accountability is multifaceted. It includes responsibility, authority, evaluation and control. Moreover school accountability is a complex issue, because it involves both internal and external relationships. While local school governance bodies, superintendents, school staff, parents, etc. may be viewed as internal accountability relationships; policymakers, government agencies, education officials, etc. may be viewed as external accountability relationships.



Successful Outcomes

In Matteson School District 162, located in the south suburbs of Chicago, we have witnessed a dramatic improvement in student learning over the past 10 years. It is an incredible story about accountability and student success.

From 2002 to 2012, our students have demonstrated a 30 percent gain in students meeting and exceeding the state standards. This was the result of strategic leadership. Also on this journey, one of our schools was identified as a Blue Ribbon School. This was the result of our students' achievement level of 90 percent or higher as measured by state assessments for seven consecutive years. Additionally, we opened a public charter high school approved by the Illinois State Board of Education to ensure that our students continue to experience high levels of learning. What drove this effort is the well documented fact that too many students are failing to learn, failing to improve academically, and failing to complete their education in Illinois. That failure is compounded by the reality that youth of today will be confronted with a world information economy that demands better than we produced in the past—and therefore makes the prospects for those who fall short of success even gloomier than we now see.

Ron Edmonds the leader of the Effective Schools movement, states, "We can whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far." Edmonds and his colleagues provide a plethora of research literature that hits at the core of the accountability question.

All high performing schools share certain essential characteristics that reflect the Correlates of the Effective Schools literature. Our school system's student success record is reflective of Edmonds' work. An examination of this body of scholarly research is central to ensuring successful outcomes for all students.



The Leadership Difference

Without question, leadership at every level in the internal organization is pivotal to student success. This leadership includes school boards, superintendents, system office staff, principals, teachers and parents. These are the areas where we exert the greatest control over the educational enterprise. Accountability in the aforementioned areas i.e., internal relationships, will have a gargantuan impact on student success today, tomorrow and in the future.

We must overcome perceptions that have a stranglehold on the public's collective belief that improvement is impossible – such as the belief that our schools do not and cannot educate the "urban child;" that the difficulties of overcoming the effects of poverty, high mobility rates and the dropout rate may be insurmountable; and that we simply cannot find global success in teaching children to read at accepted levels. All of these are mental assumptions that must be climbed and conquered. To not fix these problems would be remiss for any caring society, but merely fixing them is clearly not ambitious enough. We propose to go all the way in our effort to have an ultimate goal of providing Illinois children the finest public education in the nation.

What works for us? At the highest level of the organization, we have dynamic leadership with the school board and the superintendent. The relationship is like a textbook 101 in school governance. Ostensibly the board empowers the superintendent to provide unequivocal leadership for the school system without interference. This professional relationship sets the tone for the school system and communities we serve. Our mission is clear – it is learner-centered. Our superintendent's performance goals are clearly articulated throughout the internal organization and enthusiastically embraced by the community of learners. A well conceived and designed accountability system allows every adult to work unrelentingly on behalf of our children. We have achieved against the odds in large part because accountability is at the core of our school system mission. *

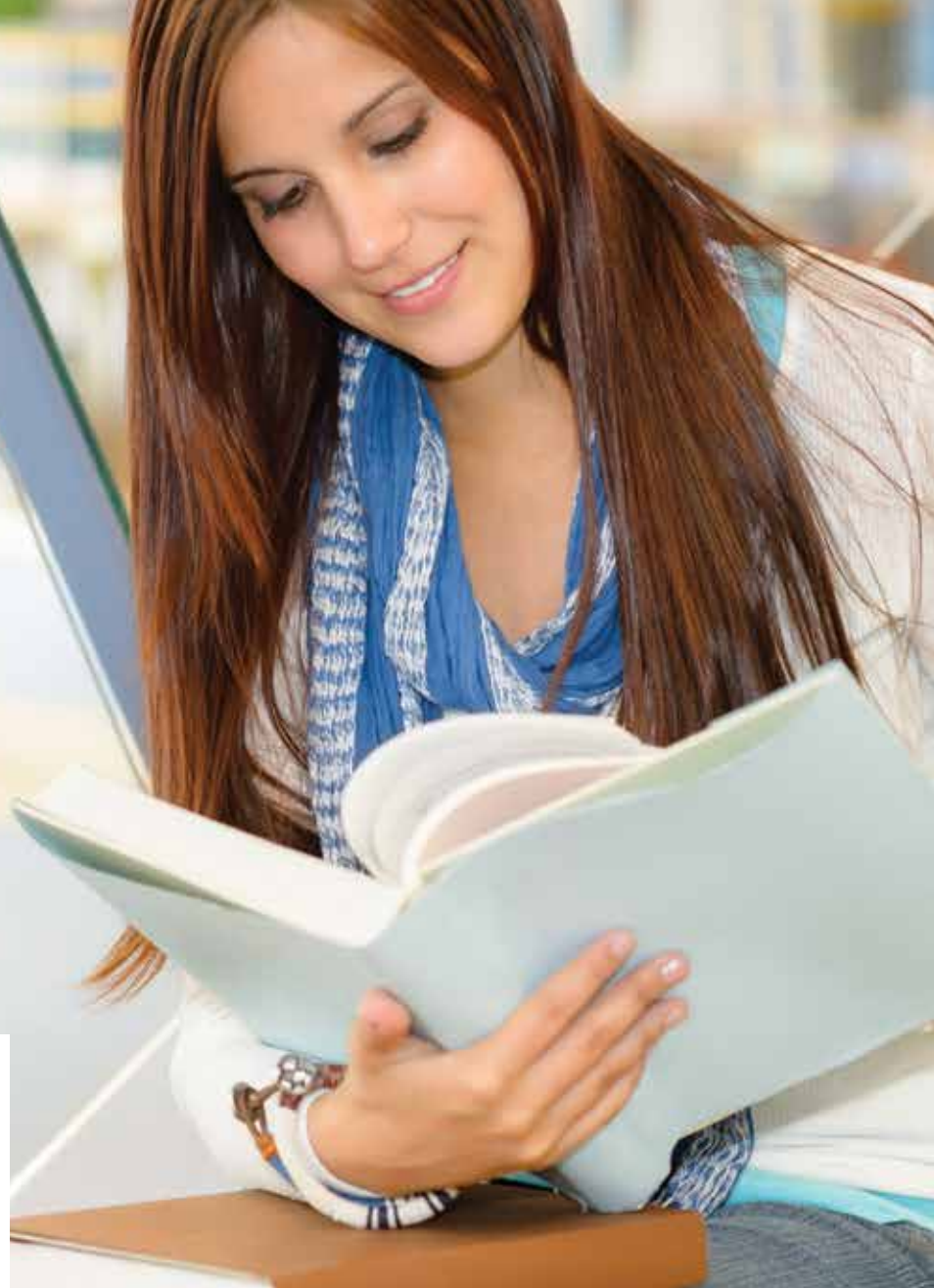
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Under the leadership of **Blondean Davis**, Ed.D., Superintendent of Matteson School District 162, scores increased from 55 percent to 82 percent and one school achieved Blue Ribbon designation in 2009. Dr. Davis' mission of providing excellent educational opportunities for students resulted in the opening of Southland College Preparatory Charter High School. In 2008, she was honored as the Illinois Superintendent of the Year. Dr. Davis, a national presenter, has been published in the Chicago Urban League Leadership Series, ASCD, Institute for Responsive Education and *Missionary Magazine*. Dr. Davis obtained Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and Doctorate in Education degrees from Loyola University and Doctor of Humane Letters from Governors State University.

Brian Ali, Ed.D. is the Associate Superintendent of Matteson School District 162. Additionally, he is the former superintendent of two K-12 school districts and past president of the Large Unit District Association in Illinois. Dr. Ali has presented at local, state, national and international workshops and seminars. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Notre Dame and his Master of Science and Doctorate in Education from the University of Wisconsin.

This is a high school where students are engaged and want to learn. I believe if school systems gave students the opportunity to dream big, set goals, meet those goals, follow their passions and get high school credit for it, there would be a lot more students excited to go to school!



HOLDING STUDENTS ACCOUNTABLE

A Student's Perspective

By Ally Kroehler

If you walked into a traditional high school today and asked 100 students if they liked school, I would guess that very few of them would say, yes. Maybe some of you have heard these comments, "Why do we have to learn about this? I am never going to use it anyway!" How might these responses change if the students got to choose what they learned about? What if students could follow their passions in high school? What if following their passions also prepared students to be successful for the rest of their lives?



A Student's Role in Education

How do we define success in our students today? Is success the ability to pass a test at the end of a class? Is success the ability to do just well enough in school to get a diploma without any extra stress? I would suggest that success is the ability to go to college, get a job and live in our society after high school. There are a lot of students out there who do not think that they need to start thinking about life after high school while in high school, but is that not why they are going to school? Schools are supposed to be preparing students to go out on their own and be successful in their lives. But how do we prepare each individual student for success in his/her own life? Giving each student individualized attention is almost impossible when teachers have classrooms of 30 to 50 students and see a total of 120 to 200 students each day. If we are willing to take away the traditional mindset of courses and classes, we find that there are other, non-traditional school systems that do a good job of helping each student find success, not only in high school, but also throughout life.

It is not the educators or the institutions that graduate then go to college, or get a job, it is the students. These students will be the next educators, CEO's, engineers, nurses and lawyers. These students will be held accountable for everything they do from now on, everything from choosing a career to getting married to buying a house. Their bosses are not going to be held accountable if they do not show up or get their work done; it all rests on the individual. I believe students in high school should be held accountable for their education. I understand that students need guidance and help along the way, but they should still be a part of deciding what they get out of their education.



An Educator's Role with Students

I just graduated from the Minnesota New Country School (MNCS) in Henderson, Minnesota. This is a project-based charter school with full-time advisory groups. What this means is that students individually get to choose projects, plan them, set goals and deadlines, and then follow through with everything they said they would do. This school puts a student's education right into his/her own hands. This is an incredible way to go through school because everyone – the teachers, parents and other students, hold each student directly accountable. There is no teacher standing in front telling the lesson for the day or the homework. There is, however, a teacher standing along side each student supporting and encouraging. Each student sets goals and tries to meet those goals every day. If students do not get their work done, they will not get credit for their project, which is far more significant than just getting a lower grade in the class. If students do not get enough credit each year they will not move on to the next grade. So, students at MNCS who do not get their work done, are only hurting themselves and making it harder and harder to graduate.

You may wonder how we can measure success in a school setting like this. There are proposal teams made up of three or four staff members. Each student has one of these teams for his/her projects. First, a student goes to the team to propose a project. This team then approves it (sometimes a student has to change things and come back a few times before it is approved) and says come back when you are done. As students go through a project they keep records of everything they do and time logs and journals describing the time they are putting into the project. All of this

is under the supervision of an advisor. When the project is completed students will bring their time logs, reflection and other materials that they produced throughout the project to the proposal team to ask for credit. This is a time where they will have the opportunity to show the staff what they have (or have not) learned and if they met the goals they set for themselves. The student then gets credit based on the time put into the project and the outcome of the project.



The Role of Standards

Students still have to meet all of the state mandated standards; they just go about it a little differently than you might think. Students at MNCS first look at their interests and choose projects based on that and look at the standards second. They see which standards they need and work those into the projects, instead of basing projects solely off of the standards. This helps students engage in their education and learn about something that not only interests them but might even be applicable to their future or relevant to the world around them.

For example, as a senior at MNCS I was required to complete a 300-hour senior project. I chose to help one of the youth leaders at my church start a non-profit. We named this non-profit MeForYou. We sell backpacks one for one. Every time we sell a backpack we will be donating a backpack full of school supplies to a student in our area that can not afford to buy supplies. We started the business this spring and already this fall are donating 200 backpacks full of supplies to students throughout southern Minnesota. This is just one example of a project that has started at MNCS, but has long lasting effects on an entire community. This project showed me how I, even as a high school student, could make a difference in the lives of those around me. I will continue to work with MeForYou after high school and hopefully for the rest of my life.

In doing these projects, students branch out and try things they might not have tried before. For example, art is not my favorite subject; I'm more of a math person, but I had the opportunity to participate in a week long experience where I worked with another student to design and build a stained glass window that is now displayed in our school. This was an amazing experience for me and helped me out of my comfort zone and into new fields. This school system also makes it easier for students to find and follow their passions. One student thought she wanted to be a beautician, so she did projects on hair and make-up, but she also had a couple of experiences where she got to work outdoors. When she graduated, she enrolled in a school to study agriculture, which she found to be her true passion.

Another amazing thing about graduating from MNCS is that MNCS requires every graduate to have a post-secondary plan. That might mean going to a two-year college, a four-year college, going into the military or even starting a business. The staff skillfully helps each student figure out what to do after high school and guides him/her to become a successful member of society.

Consider a high school that strives for each student to not only meet the state requirements but also strives to guide each student to meet his/her personal education goals and have a plan in life as well as how to get there. This is a high school where students are engaged and want to learn. I believe if school systems gave students the opportunity to dream big, set goals, meet those goals, follow their passions and get high school credit for it, there would be a lot more students excited to go to school! *

Ally Kroehler graduated in May of 2012 from the Minnesota New Country School in Henderson, MN. While in high school she helped start a non-profit business called MeForYou, a business that donates a backpack full of school supplies to a child in need for every backpack sold. Additionally in high school she participated in activities such as Knowledge Bowl, Mock Trial and Cross Country. Kroehler is a freshman in the Honors Program at the University of Sioux Falls, majoring in Nursing.

Promoting and Supporting a Data-to-Action, Results-Oriented Culture within Durham Public Schools

J. Brent Cooper, Ed.D., Terri Mazingo, Ed.D., and Dustin N. Johnson, Ed.D.



Setting the Stage

The beginning of the 2011-12 school year was a time of transition within the Research and Accountability (R and A) Department for Durham Public Schools (DPS) in Durham, NC. R and A entered the 2011-12 school year with a new department leader, two vacant data analyst positions, and a vacant state testing coordinator position. The inter-departmental change established a climate ripe for promoting and supporting a Data-to-Action, results-driven culture within R and A. Through the hiring of new, data-driven leaders to fill vacancies within the department, along with the leadership of a data-driven, results-oriented leader, R and A was re-organized and re-focused to devote its resources to serving the educational leaders and teachers of DPS.

R and A's pursuit of a higher-quality Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture was supported by the results-driven practices of DPS Superintendent Dr. Eric J. Becoats. One of the first actions taken by Dr. Becoats upon his arrival in DPS was to lead the school system and members of the DPS community in the development and implementation of the DPS Strategic Plan, *One Vision. One Durham*. Within this plan, goals and strategies were adopted that promote the Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture that R and A has so diligently sought to establish.

An immediate strategy supported by the newly appointed Assistant Superintendent of R and A was to assess the baseline performance of R and A through the completion of an external department audit. The findings from the external audit in October 2011 and the system-wide Central Services Customer Satisfaction Survey in March 2012, provided baseline information on the quality of services provided by R and A, according to the perceptions of a diverse sample of DPS employees, which included central office and school administrators, as well as teachers. R and A also used findings from these two assessments to design a continuous improvement service plan for R and A for the remainder of the 2011-12 school year and beyond.



Higher Quality Service: Modeling a Data-to-Action Culture

A key organizational decision made within R and A early in the fall 2011 involved setting higher standards for deliverables and service to constituents. An emphasis on high-quality, impeccable deliverables and service was identified as a possible area for improvement by the external audit and by school administrators via their completion of the R and A, department-specific questions within the Central Services Customer Satisfaction Survey. Processes of accountability and documentation were established within R and A to track the quantity of data requests submitted to R and A, the purposes of these requests, and the audiences who made these data requests. Accountability processes such as the triangulation of vetting data for accuracy, the creation of data communication plans and the creation of data set cover memos resulted in the production of more impeccable deliverables and service. By improving the quality of its deliverables and service, R and A was successfully modeling the Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture team members wanted to promote to system and school-level administrators and teachers. In its successful promotion of a of this culture, R and A was developing evidences that aligned with AdvancED Standard 5, Using Results for Continuous Improvement, within the system's schools and the school system. With the foundation for a higher-quality and impeccable Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture established, R and A team members focused for the remainder of the 2011-12 school year on identifying potential areas for improved data analysis service.



Taking Data Analysis to a New Level: Data Projects and Deliverables During the 2011-12 School Year

Several R and A endeavors during the 2011-12 school year illustrated the Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture. The 2011 Academic Update, an analysis, comparison and presentation of system and school-level student academic achievement data from 2009-10 to the 2010-11 school year completed in October 2011 represented a transformation point in the culture shift within R and A. During the completion of this analysis, processes and procedures were established that set high expectations for future deliverables and service provided by R and A. Comprehensive reports and presentations on: the Early Warning Tracking System Data Protocol, teacher working conditions, professional learning communities, student academic growth and proficiency on End-of-Grade and End-of-Course tests and additional educational programs and initiatives currently implemented within DPS were later completed using the same standards and expectations. Likewise, the feedback obtained by R and A from system leaders in the completion of the 2011 Academic Report reinforced the importance of using results to drive the continuous improvement process. R and A converted the immediate credibility and recognition it received from the 2011 Academic Update into momentum that would drive the Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture beyond the realms of the department to other educational arenas within DPS.

The second data analysis venture that allowed R and A to model its Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture was through the creation of the Early Warning Tracking System Data Protocol. Beginning in late fall 2011, Ms. Karin Beckett, Data Analyst and Program Evaluator and designer of the Early Warning Tracking System Data Protocol for DPS, created data files for elementary schools that measured the presence of at-risk indicators (variables) for all students. The purpose of the Early Warning Tracking System Data Protocol and how its data can be used to better meet the educational and socio-emotional needs of elementary school students was presented to Elementary Area Superintendents, principals, assistant principals and school instructional facilitators. At the request of Area Superintendents and other members of the DPS Executive Leadership Team, the Early Warning Tracking System Data Protocol was modified and expanded to assess at-risk indicators for middle and high school students during the spring 2012.

A fourth step taken within R and A during the 2011-12 school year to promote the importance of establishing a Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture within DPS was the increased emphasis on creating and administering surveys in an effort to assess various programs and initiatives currently active within DPS. Processes for administering high-quality surveys, which included establishing an annual survey calendar, creating accurate sample lists for administered surveys and concluding each survey with a comprehensive analysis of the survey data, were established.

A final endeavor that has allowed R and A to promote its support of the Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture throughout the school system has been the development of various professional development training sessions that have empowered DPS administrators and teachers to implement Data-to-Action strategies within their departments and schools. Since the late fall, 2011 professional development training modules have been developed for the Early Warning Tracking System Data Protocol and the use of the K12 Insight Survey software platform, which will allow constituents to gather data on various programs and initiatives at the system and school-levels.



The Data-to-Action Vision for R and A; 2012-13 and Beyond

The initial goal R and A intends to pursue in its promotion and support for a Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture throughout DPS during the 2012-13 school year is the re-design of the R and A web page on the DPS website. Throughout the summer 2012, DPS employees external to the R and A department have collaborated with members of R and A on the desired information they wish to see incorporated on the re-designed R and A website. The new website will improve communication between R and A and its school system and external constituents. A second point of emphasis for R and A throughout the 2012-13 school year is to continue to establish written processes and procedures for customer service. Working towards this goal should result in R and A delivering higher-quality, customer service for which Superintendent Becoats is a strong proponent. A third major point of emphasis for R and A throughout the 2012-13 school year is to continue to design and deliver professional development sessions that will empower DPS constituents with the data analysis skills they need to continue the promotion and support of a Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture in their schools and departments. A final point of emphasis for the R and A department for the 2012-13 school year is to continue to provide the behind-the-scenes, data analysis services needed by DPS's model for data-driven leadership, Superintendent Eric J. Becoats. As Dr. Becoats and his Executive Leadership Team recognize the need for the assessment of current educational programs and initiatives within DPS, R and A will strive to model the Data-to-Action, results-oriented culture that drives our data analysis work, and which we emphatically support and promote to all administrators and educators within DPS. *

J. Brent Cooper is a data analyst and program evaluator within the Research and Accountability Department for Durham Public Schools in Durham, NC. Dr. Cooper also serves as an academic tutor for student-athletes in the areas of social science research, sociology, statistics and history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Previously, Dr. Cooper served as a school administrator at all levels of K-12 education after beginning his career as a middle and high school social studies teacher.

Dustin N. Johnson is an assistant professor in the School of Education at High Point University in High Point, NC. Dr. Johnson served as an elementary and middle school principal after beginning his career as an elementary teacher.

Terri Mazingo is the Assistant Superintendent of Research and Accountability for Durham Public Schools. She provides leadership and oversight of the department in such areas as: data, grants, program evaluation, research, state assessments, surveys and testing. Dr. Mazingo also serves on a variety of educational boards and is affiliated with several professional organizations.



SUGGESTED READING



Transforming Education: Delivering on our Promise to Every Child

The Council of Chief State School Officers

It is imperative that we transform the national education agenda so that each and every child may succeed. This paper identifies four areas of focus that will lead the systems change necessary for a true transformation of teaching and learning. Those areas are Next Generation Learning; Standards, Assessment, and Accountability; System of Educator Development; and Comprehensive Data Systems. The main purpose and intention of this document is to fuel discussion, establish a rationale for why we have chosen these four areas of work, highlight the connections among the areas and outline next steps.

>>> www.ccsso.org/Documents/2009/Transforming_Education_Delivering_2009.pdf



Testing, Standards, & Accountability: Overview

National Conference of State Legislatures

This article provides an overview of the possibilities of a standards-based accountability system, which sets goals in the form of standards, assigns responsibilities for meeting those goals and holds the system accountable for its performance. Under this type of system, the state's role changes from ensuring compliance with regulations, to providing incentives and offering technical assistance to build school capacity. Included with the article is a list of resources on education accountability systems.

>>> <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/educ/testing-standards-amp-accountability-over.aspx>



Educational Accountability Professional Voices from the Field

Kenneth D. Garipey, Brenda L. Spencer, and J-C Couture

This short book takes a look at the pros and cons of accountability in education, outlining the effects on learning, how it relates to school choice and the influence it has on teachers, among other topics.

>>> <http://www.pasisahlberg.com/downloads/Learning%20First%20Pasi%20Chapter%202009.pdf>



Accountability in Education: A Primer for School Leaders

Michael Heim

Author Michael Heim provides this monograph to help school leaders think about, understand and respond thoughtfully and effectively to the increasing demands for accountability in education. Readers will acquire a comprehensive and rather sophisticated set of concepts and insights into accountability that will help them in working with staff, in building collaborative relationships with others within the Department and with external partners, and in contending with critics.

>>> www.prel.org/products/products/accountability.htm



Who is Accountable for Children's Education?

By the People, America in the World

This discussion guide provides a look at what roles schools, teachers, families and communities have in the education of children. It explores for further contemplation what steps must be taken to hold systems accountable for providing quality education to the next generation.

>>> www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/pdfs/stlouis_accountability_2005.pdf



Toward Teacher Evaluation that Promotes Professional Learning and Growth

Angela Minnici and Sheri Leo

Authors Anglea Minnici and Sheri Leo explore the critical connections between teacher evaluation and professional learning and growth. They argue that a significant shift in culture and realignment of resources and structures at the school and district level are required to support teachers' development from novices to experts.

>>> www.advanc-ed.org/TeacherEval



About AdvancED

AdvancED believes in the power of education to shape the world in which we live. We offer continuous improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students. Continuous improvement through process, content and technology is our business. AdvancED serves and engages 30,000 public and private schools and school systems across the United States and in more than 70 countries, educating 16 million students.

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- **Headquarters:**
9115 Westside Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30009
888.41ED.NOW
- **Accreditation Office:**
Arizona State University
P.O. Box 871008
Tempe, AZ 85287-1008
800.41ED.NOW



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Alpharetta, GA 30009

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