



Principles and Processes for State Leadership on Next-Generation Accountability Systems

CCSSO, on behalf of the states, hereby commits to further states' proactive leadership in promoting college- and career-readiness for all students by establishing next-generation state accountability systems. Our intent is to ensure that every student has access to an education that prepares them for success in college and career.

Through our Next-Generation State Accountability Taskforce, CCSSO has developed a *Roadmap on Next-Generation State Accountability Systems*. This Roadmap provides a guide written by states, for states, on building accountability systems centered on preparing all students for success in college and career. The ultimate goal of these systems is to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education. States will achieve this goal by (1) driving school and district performance towards college- and career-readiness, (2) distinguishing performance in order to more meaningfully target supports and interventions to the students most in need, (3) providing timely, transparent data to spur action at all levels, and (4) fostering innovation and continuous improvement throughout the system.

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Outlined in this document are the main principles and processes that form the basis of the Roadmap and that will guide state action through the work to design and implement next-generation accountability systems aligned with college- and career-readiness.

Background

In our 21st century global economy and society, the success of individuals and our nation depends on our ability to educate all children to higher standards and to close long-standing achievement gaps. States are committed to the creation of education systems that promote continuous growth for all students, with the goal that they graduate high school with the rigorous knowledge and skills required for success in college and career.

Achieving this goal will require significant policy reforms. States are leading this effort through development and adoption of college- and career-ready, internationally benchmarked standards; development of aligned, improved assessments; development and implementation of P-20 data systems that can follow student progress; establishment and reporting of accurate graduation rates; development of growth models for accountability;

and, more recently, movement on new systems of educator evaluation anchored in student achievement. This is a bold and comprehensive agenda.

States developing and implementing next-generation accountability systems is the logical and necessary next step in state leadership. Accountability currently serves as a core strategy for education reform. Although concepts within the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) are vital to our continued progress (such as NCLB's focus on student achievement outcomes in assessing school, district, and state performance, and on disaggregation of data to help identify and close achievement gaps), NCLB's requirements as a whole are now outdated.

Next-generation accountability systems must *build upon and move beyond* present NCLB-based accountability systems. Our principles focus on school, district, and state accountability. Our goal for holding schools, districts, and states accountable must be to ensure that every student has access to an education that can significantly advance student achievement. Evidence and experience show that our current, narrowly defined, loosely coupled accountability systems are promoting incremental improvement at best.

Principles for Next-Generation State Accountability Systems

CCSSO, on behalf of its members, commits to continue state leadership in promoting college- and career-readiness by establishing next-generation state accountability systems consistent with the core principles listed below (as further defined in the Roadmap):

- Alignment of performance goals to college- and career-ready standards. The performance goals of each state's accountability system will be aligned with college- and career-readiness, to promote continuous growth for every student toward that performance level and beyond. This means that each state's accountability system must set annual performance benchmarks at levels that are on track for each student to graduate from high school with both the rigorous content knowledge and high-order skills necessary for success in college and career, and must further reflect and value continuous improvement for all schools and students to meet and exceed those expectations.
- Annual determinations for each school and district. Each system will make annual accountability determinations for all publicly funded schools and districts. The determinations must set a high bar for achievement and improvement for all students; make valid, reliable, and meaningful distinctions regarding the performance levels of schools and districts; and address both the current performance of the school or district and the extent to which that performance is improving.
- Focus on student outcomes. Initial accountability determinations will focus on student outcomes, including both status and growth toward college- and career-readiness, with students, subgroups, and/or schools performing below performance levels expected to make significant improvement toward being on

track to college- and career-ready graduation. Initial accountability measures will include, but not be limited to, improved assessments in reading and math and accurate graduation rates, as well as other measures based on each state's goals and context, such as additional subjects beyond reading and math; additional college-ready assessments and college credit accumulation; college entry, remediation, and persistence rates; career preparedness as measured by industry certifications and other measures; reading proficiency in the early grades; etc. States would have discretion to weigh measures and apply them conjunctively or on a compensatory basis, provided that the focus is on meaningful student outcomes.

- Continued Commitment to Disaggregation. Each system will continue to support disaggregation of student data for accountability determinations and reporting (such as by race, ethnicity, poverty, disability, and limited English proficiency), to help identify and address significant achievement gaps and ensure that the needs of particular subgroups are not masked by aggregate student achievement. This includes particular attention to schools with the lowest performing subgroups and/or the greatest gaps in performance.
- Reporting of timely, actionable, and accessible data. Data related to school and district performance will be reported in a manner that is timely, actionable, and accessible—to improve teaching and learning and support policy improvements at all levels. This includes disaggregated reporting of student outcome data as well as available input data and data on returns on investment—to promote efficiency and effectiveness.
- Deeper diagnostic reviews. Student outcomes will be the cornerstone of accountability. Moreover, each accountability system will include, as appropriate, deeper analysis and diagnostic reviews of school and district performance, particularly for low-performing schools, to create a tighter link between initial accountability determinations and appropriate supports and interventions. States may classify schools and local educational agencies not simply on the length of underperformance, as under NCLB, but on both student outcomes and deeper analysis of the data, conditions, plans, and capacities in each school and district, leveraging accreditation and other processes at state discretion.
- Building school and district capacity. Each system will focus on building district and school capacity for significant and sustained improvement in student achievement toward college- and career-ready performance goals. This will require general systems of supports and interventions relevant to all schools and a continued focus on state capacity as well.
- Targeting lowest performing schools. While states will be developing accountability systems that hold all schools and districts accountable, significant interventions will be focused on at least the lowest performing five percent of

schools (elementary and middle, and high schools) and their districts (in addition to targeted interventions to address the lowest performing subgroups and/or schools with the greatest achievement gaps). States must have flexibility to craft interventions that are rigorous, systemic, and context-specific in order to turn around the lowest performing schools on an urgent, ambitious, reasoned time line, with constant evaluation, sustained investment, and true results.

- Innovation, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Each state’s accountability system should drive innovation and itself be dynamic—promoting innovative accountability approaches with rigorous evaluation to drive continuous improvement over time. Each state needs to develop and implement plans for evaluation and improvements related to the system as a whole, core elements of the system, and the impact of the system on individual schools and districts.

Formation of State Consortium on College- and Career-Ready Accountability Systems

Moving forward, CCSSO will work with its member states to help each state develop a state-specific accountability model consistent with the principles above (and the broader Roadmap), and we will work to inform and secure the support of other key state and local leaders for this effort, through CCSSO convening a new *Multistate Consortium on College- and Career-Ready Accountability Systems*.

Each state will be invited to join the Consortium and commit to building a new, college- and career-ready accountability system consistent with the principles above. The purpose of the Consortium will be to support each state’s policy development process by providing a forum for cross-state interaction and learning, as well as expert support in dealing with tough issues, such as identifying valid outcome measures; developing growth models; establishing diagnostic review; and ensuring significant, effective interventions in the lowest-performing schools. The Consortium will support each state in developing its own accountability system, consistent with the principles outlined above, innovate over time, and ensure maximum federal flexibility and support. While participation in the Consortium is not a prerequisite to the design of an accountability system in line with the principles, work with member states is underway and will move quickly. Some states have already begun this work, and will present early models of state accountability consistent with the principles above.

State Call for Federal Action Consistent with State Principles

Earlier this year, CCSSO released a letter to Secretary Duncan and leaders in Congress committing to state leadership in standards, assessments, and accountability; calling on Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in a manner that advances the bold state leadership; and, if ESEA reauthorization is delayed, calling on the Secretary to support state reform efforts through rigorous peer review and NCLB state waiver authority. We hereby strongly renew our pledge and call for federal action.

We call on Congress to reauthorize ESEA to codify the principles of next-generation accountability systems outlined above, while leaving full discretion to states to design the details of the systems and to promote continuous improvement over time. This remains our first choice for federal action.

In the absence of ESEA reauthorization this year, we hereby inform Secretary Duncan of the intention of our members to utilize the authority expressly granted to states under NCLB Section 9401 to propose new models of accountability. Beginning immediately and continuing over time, with support from the Consortium on College- and Career-Ready Accountability Systems, states will submit new accountability models for secretarial review and approval consistent with the principles above. And we call on Secretary Duncan to affirmatively establish a new, improved process of peer review, with deference to state judgment, to work collaboratively to review and approve these new models.

Finally, we commit to state evaluation and improvement of these new accountability systems over time—to best drive college and career ready performance, to inform future state leadership, and to inform future ESEA reauthorization if delayed. We will know we have succeeded if and only if accountability truly serves as a meaningful strategy in dramatically improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps, at scale, toward the goal of all students graduating from high school ready for college, career, and life.