**Center for American Progress Submission for Fordham Institute Accountability Design Competition:**

***Proposal from the State of Excellencia***

Design Objectives

Our proposed accountability system is guided by three main objectives, or values:

1. **Providing clarity, transparency, and rich information for parents.** School ratings, as well as the indicators that lead to those ratings, should be clear and transparent for parents, and should reflect meaningful differences between schools. Beyond the indicators that make up ratings, the system should provide information for parents about other aspects of the school that helps them determine whether it is the best place for their child.
2. **Rewarding high levels of growth for all students, including those above and below grade-level expectations.** The ultimate goal of the system should be for all students to graduate high school prepared for college and a career, as measured by the state’s academic standards. However, since students enter school at widely different levels, the system should hold schools accountable for showing high levels of growth and getting students on a trajectory that will lead to them graduating college- and career-ready. Students below grade level should make more than a year’s worth of growth, and students at or above grade level should make at least a year’s worth of growth.
3. **Providing district and school leaders and teachers with useful information.** Accountability systems should do more than just rate, label, and sort schools. They should provide signals to what is important, and drive positive action by local leaders, parents, and teachers. When considering indicators for the system, the primary criteria should be whether low performance on the indicator will incentivize positive change that will benefit students.

Indicators

Our proposed accountability system includes three “buckets” of indicators that will inform school and district ratings. All of these indicators would be calculated across the whole school, rather than grade-by-grade.

1. **Achievement**
   * Performance on state assessments in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, for all students and for each subgroup.
   * Calculated based on whether all students and each subgroup are meeting or making progress towards their state-set targets for the percentage of students achieving at grade level
   * Additional credit if the performance of low-income students, students with disabilities or English language learners (ELLs) is in the top 25% for the state.
2. **Growth**
   * Percentage of students making meaningful growth in English language arts and mathematics based on the state assessments, for all students and for each subgroup.
   * For students who are at or above grade level, “meaningful growth” is at least one year’s worth of growth. For students who are below grade level, “meaningful growth” is more than one year’s worth of growth.
   * Also includes the percentage of English language learners who reach the “proficient” level on the state’s English language proficiency assessment within one year of enrollment in the school.
3. **Culture and climate**
   * Student, parent, and teacher engagement, as measured by surveys; chronic absenteeism; suspension and expulsion rates; availability of art and music; and availability of physical education, recess, and healthy but appetizing meals.
   * Student and parent engagement, chronic absenteeism, and suspension and expulsion rates measured for all students and for each subgroup.
   * Other indicators measured for all students only.

In addition to these indicators that are part of school ratings, the accountability system would provide clear data on a number of other key aspects of school quality that do not easily translate to indicators, including resource allocation, staff bios, course offerings by grade, and extracurricular offerings. For more information, see the section on ourschools.org below.

Determination of Ratings

Under our proposed accountability system, schools would receive separate ratings for achievement, growth, and culture and climate. Based on those ratings, schools would then be differentiated using a matrix to determine an overall rating of green, yellow, or red. See attachment for a visual depiction of the matrix.

Schools with high growth (i.e., in top 25% of the state) and schools with high achievement and average growth (i.e., in middle 50% of the state) would be identified as “green” and would receive recognition, rewards, and flexibility and autonomy from federal and state regulations. To receive a “green” rating, schools must also have at least an average culture and climate rating.

Schools with low achievement, low growth, and low culture and climate (i.e., in bottom 25% of the state in all categories) would be identified as “red” (i.e., “comprehensive intervention and support schools” under ESSA) and would receive the most rigorous interventions.

Other schools would be identified as “yellow”, with local discretion on how to further differentiate using the achievement, growth, and culture and climate ratings.

To identify schools with consistently underperforming subgroups (i.e., “targeted intervention and support schools” under ESSA), the state would calculate achievement, growth, and culture and climate ratings for each subgroup, and determine whether an individual subgroup has had low ratings in the same “bucket” for three consecutive years. If a school had a consistently underperforming subgroup, it could not receive a “green” rating. If a school had a subgroup with low ratings in all three “buckets” for three consecutive years, it would receive a “red” rating.

While districts would not receive green, yellow, or red ratings, the state would identify as low-performing those districts with 5 or more “red” schools and districts where the majority of schools have “red” ratings.

The steps below describe how the “bucket” ratings would be determined.

*Achievement*

1. For each subject and for the whole school and each subgroup, assign one point if achievement improved but the target was not met, and two points if the target was met.
2. For low-income students, students with disabilities, and ELLs, assign one additional point for each group that is in the top 25% of the state for that group.
3. Calculate the total number of points, and divide by the total number of subgroups in the school, including the “all students” group.
4. Calculate achievement score: 35% weight for English language arts, 35% for mathematics, 15% for science, and 15% for social studies.
5. Assign achievement rating: “high” if the score is in the top 25% of the state; “average” if the score is in the middle 50% of the state; “low” if the score if in the bottom 25% of the state.

*Growth*

1. For each subject and for the whole school and each subgroup, determine the number of students at or above grade level who made at least one year’s worth of growth and the number of students below grade level who made more than a year’s worth of growth.
2. Add these two numbers together and divide by the total number of students in the school or subgroup to determine the percentage of students making meaningful growth.
3. Assign one point for each group that is in the middle 50% of the state for that group, and two points for each group that is in the top 25% of the state for that group.
4. For low-income students, students with disabilities, and ELLs, assign one additional point for each group that is in the top 25% of the state for that group.
5. Calculate the total number of points, and divide by the total number of subgroups in the school, including the “all students” group.
6. For English language proficiency, determine the percentage of ELLs who have reached the “proficient” level on the state’s English language proficiency assessment or are on track to do so within 3 years of enrollment.
7. Assign one point if the percentage is in the middle 50% of the state, and two points if the percentage is in the top 25% of the state.
8. Average the subject-level scores, assigning weights of 40% for English language arts, 40% for mathematics, and 20% for English language proficiency.
9. Assign growth rating: “high” if the score is in the top 25% of the state; “average” if the score is in the middle 50% of the state; “low” if the score if in the bottom 25% of the state.

*Culture and Climate*

1. For each measure, determine the average score for the whole school (and each subgroup, if applicable).
2. Assign one point for each score that is in the middle 50% of the state, and two points for each score that is in the top 25% of the state.
3. Calculate the total number of points and, if applicable, divide by the total number of subgroups in the school, including the “all students” group.
4. Average the scores for each measure, assigning equal weights to (1) student, parent, and teacher engagement; (2) chronic absenteeism; (3) suspension and expulsion rates; (4) availability of art and music; and (5) availability of physical education, recess, and healthy but appetizing meals.
5. Assign culture and climate rating: “high” if the score is in the top 25% of the state; “average” if the score is in the middle 50% of the state; “low” if the score if in the bottom 25% of the state.

Ourschools.org

In order to provide parents, advocates, and system leaders with clear, straightforward, easy-to-access information about the schools in their communities, a key element of our accountability proposal is to create ourschools.org. This user-friendly website, modeled after real estate sites like Zillow.com and building on the work of sites such as Colorado’s SchoolView, will consist of an interactive map with little red school houses everywhere schools – traditional public and public charter – are located. No pdf documents, no firewalls, no disclaimers or messages from the superintendent, just a simple, intuitive interface where parents and other key stakeholders can get all the data that is included in the accountability system and more about the schools in their community.

How will this website work? First, like Zillow, when the user clicks on the map, the website will zoom in and the schools in focus will become bigger. When the user clicks on a school, a sidebar containing all the important information about the school’s performance, bios of the school’s leadership and faculty, programs and offerings, and more will pop up. The page will be colored green, yellow, or red at the top to illustrate the overall rating of the school.

The key features of this site will be twofold: most importantly, users will be able to see “comparables” when they select a school. This feature will reveal schools within the same state (listed by nearest schools first) that have roughly the same proportion of low-income students, students with disabilities, and ELLs along with the schools’ achievement, growth, and culture and climate ratings by subgroup. Through this feature, parents and other users will immediately be able to see how their child’s school, or the schools that they are considering sending their child too, compare to schools with similar student bodies. Are there other schools that are serving similar student bodies but with twice as many students attaining more than a year’s worth of growth in English or math? Is there a school like that just down the road from the one you’re inclined to send your child to? Ourschools.org will enable parents to answer those questions in two simple clicks.

The second key feature of this website is that, in addition to providing school ratings, it will allow users to select the features they most desire in a school, such as high academic achievement, extended learning time, art and music classes three times per week, small class sizes, school facilities rating, daily recess for all students, second language instruction, expertise in serving students with disabilities, an on-site vegetable garden, and more in order to see which schools offer those elements. Our system will solicit information from each school’s leadership and then validate the information in order to allow the schools themselves to identify what makes their school unique. This feature supports parents by acknowledging that they value different things in their child’s school and empowering them to be able to determine the right school for their child.

**Attachment: School Rating Matrix**

**Growth**

**Achievement**

**Bottom 25%**

**Middle 50%**

**Top 25%**

**Bottom 25%**

**Middle 50%**

**Top 25%**

Green: Schools with high growth, or schools with high achievement and average or high growth. Must have high or average culture and climate.

Red: Schools with low growth, low achievement, and low culture and climate.

Yellow: All other schools.