



# ACCOUNTABILITY IN K-12 EDUCATION

## BACKGROUND BRIEF

LPRO: LEGISLATIVE POLICY AND RESEARCH OFFICE

In education policy, accountability generally refers to attempts to ensure that students are enrolled in high-quality, effective schools. According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS), “school accountability systems can serve many purposes, including sharing information, measuring progress toward state and local goals, and supporting greater educational equity.”<sup>1</sup> Accountability systems can require schools and districts to answer to the state, their local communities, or a combination of the two. While some states have chosen punitive accountability systems, others are either support- or incentive-based.

No Child Left Behind, the federal law passed in 2001, laid out strict requirements for state accountability systems. Its replacement, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), gives states a great deal more flexibility. Under ESSA, each state had to write a plan and have it approved by the United States Department of Education (ED). Oregon’s ESSA Plan was approved by ED in August 2017.

In addition to the measures outlined in Oregon’s ESSA Plan, the state’s accountability system includes Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) for districts, self-reported assurances by districts that they comply with rules enacted by the State Board of Education, school and district report cards, and accountability measures enacted as part of the [Student Success Act in 2019](#).

### OREGON’S ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

**Design.** According to Oregon’s ESSA Plan, the purpose of its accountability system is to identify schools that would benefit from additional supports and interventions. ESSA requires that Oregon identify its lowest-performing five percent of schools for improvement. Oregon’s state plan establishes nine weighted indicators for schools. School performance on these indicators can lead to a

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>OREGON’S ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLANS (CIPs)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DIVISION 22 REPORTING</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SCHOOL AND DISTRICT REPORT CARDS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS ACT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>STAFF CONTACT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: DIVISION 22 RULES</b>	<b>7</b>

<sup>1</sup> Education Commission of the States, “50-State Comparison: States’ School Accountability Systems,” May 31, 2018. Available online at <<https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-states-school-accountability-systems/>>.

designation of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI). The nine indicators are:

1. Academic achievement in English language arts: the percentage of students achieving level 3 or level 4 scores on statewide assessments;
2. Academic achievement in mathematics: the percentage of students achieving level 3 or level 4 scores on statewide assessments;
3. Academic growth in English language arts: the median growth percentile for students on the statewide assessments;
4. Academic growth in mathematics: the median growth percentile for students on the statewide assessments;
5. Progress of English language learners: a combined measure taking into account growth percentiles and whether or not students are on-track to proficiency;
6. For high schools, graduation rate: the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate;
7. Chronic absenteeism: the percentage of students absent for 10 percent or more of the days they are enrolled;<sup>2</sup>
8. For high schools, freshman on-track: the percentage of students earning at least one-quarter of the credits required for graduation by the end of their first year of high school; and
9. For high schools, five-year completion rate: the percentage of students with a high school diploma or equivalent, such as a GED, extended diploma, or adult high school diploma, by the end of their fifth year after entering high school.

Each indicator will be measured on five levels. Table 1 lists the performance levels that will be assigned for each of the indicators.

**Table 1: Levels Assigned to School Performance**

Level	Criteria
Level 5	Meets the long-term goal.
Level 4	Meets interim target, but not long-term goal.
Level 3	Below interim target, but not in lowest 30 percent of schools.
Level 2	In lowest 30 percent of schools, but not in lowest 10 percent.
Level 1	In lowest 10 percent.

*Source: Oregon's Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, Oregon Department of Education*

Under Oregon's ESSA plan, Title I schools rated at level 1 in at least half of the indicators, and high schools with a four-year graduation rate below 67 percent, will be designated as CSI.

All schools where a specific group of students are rated at level 1 in at least half of the indicators will be designated as TSI.

<sup>2</sup> Despite the rated indicator being *chronic absenteeism*, school and district report cards will display the percentage of students who are regular attenders, not the percentage who are chronically absent.

**Implementation.** After schools are identified, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) will work with districts to roll out a tiered model of supports. Districts with three or more CSI or TSI schools will receive the most intensive supports. ODE has identified three levels of support:

1. General supports: all districts will have access to technical assistance and guidance, including resources for continuous improvement planning.
2. Second-tier supports: districts with two or fewer combined CSI and TSI schools will receive technical assistance and modest financial support.
3. Top-tier supports: districts with three or more CSI and TSI schools will have access to technical assistance; facilitation to support needs assessment, stakeholder engagement, and planning processes; and financial resources for improvement activities.

CSI and TSI schools are identified by ODE. Districts receiving top- and second-tier supports will begin assessing needs and establishing priorities, receiving assistance from ODE to conduct high-level needs assessments.

CSI and TSI schools have improvement plans that will be monitored by their districts. Districts containing CSI or TSI schools develop district implementation teams guided by ODE and charged with reviewing data and conducting deeper diagnostic and root cause analysis. Following diagnostic review, ODE guides districts to select priority systems for improvement. District implementation plans must include priority actions and justification, key action steps, leading indicators, consideration of early learning, and collaboration with key stakeholders and tribal governments. The state provides planning grants, technical assistance, potential systems development and implementation coaches, implementation resources, and ongoing professional learning.

ODE supports districts by offering leadership coaching, technical systems coaching, district liaisons, professional learning opportunities for educators, and consultations with ODE's equity team.

Districts must conduct and provide quarterly updates to both ODE and local school boards.

ODE reviews districts' progress annually for TSI schools and every three years for CSI schools. If adequate progress is not made, ODE determines appropriate additional interventions.

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLANS (CIPs)

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Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs) are required for all districts by [ORS 329.095 \(2021\)](#) and were originally enacted in 1991 as part of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. State law allows ODE to require districts to file CIPs periodically, notify ODE of any substantial changes, or update its CIP when there has been a substantial change.

CIPs are regulated by the provisions of [OAR 581-022-2250](#) and [guidance](#) issued by ODE.

**Needs assessment.** In order to determine what elements should be part of a district's CIP, ODE recommends that schools and districts engage in a comprehensive needs assessment process. This process is aligned with requirements of the Student Success Act.

**Plan development.** Following the needs assessment process, schools and districts will develop improvement plans. Required elements include mission, vision, long-term goals, strategies to support attainment of goals, indicators, and action steps.

## DIVISION 22 REPORTING

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[ORS 326.051](#) (2021) requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish standards for public schools. These standards are commonly referred to as the Division 22 standards and are set forth in [OAR Chapter 581, Division 22](#). ODE monitors compliance based on annual self-reported assurances from districts, as well as an established complaint process.

SBE requires districts to report annually on all Division 22 standards. Districts use a checklist to mark whether they comply with the 55 administrative rules, listed in Appendix A.

Under the provisions of [ORS 327.103 \(2021\)](#), if a district is found to be in violation of the standards established by SBE, and the deficiencies are not corrected before the next school year begins, the Superintendent of Public Instruction may withhold portions of State School Fund money until the deficiencies are corrected, unless the withholding would cause an undue hardship. After a finding of deficiency, school districts have 90 days to submit a plan for meeting standardization requirements to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, although districts can receive extensions of this deadline under certain circumstances. After submission of the plan, the Superintendent of Public Instruction may grant an extension of up to 12 months for meeting standards to the submitting district.

Each district is required to have its own complaint process. If a complainant is still not satisfied after a district's final decision, they may appeal to ODE. ODE's appeal process is set out in [Oregon Administrative Rules, Chapter 581, Division 2](#). Appeals must be submitted in writing via mail, in person, or electronically. Complainants must list their name and address, the name of the district, the name of the student, and a statement of facts. The Deputy Superintendent decides whether or not to accept the appeal. Districts then have 30 days to submit a written report, including a statement of facts, a statement of district action, and a list of any other complaints concerning the subject of the appeal. The Deputy Superintendent then investigates and issues a written final order. If a violation is found, the final order includes corrective actions that must be taken by the district.

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## SCHOOL AND DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

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State law requires ODE to publish school and district report cards. The requirement was enacted in 1999 as [Senate Bill 1329](#). First issued in 2000, the report cards, currently named [At-A-Glance Reports](#), contain information on schools and districts, including demographic information, key statistics such as regular attendance rates and graduation rates, but not test score proficiency data. Until 2015, the report cards contained summative ratings of each school and district.

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## STUDENT SUCCESS ACT

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The [Student Success Act \(House Bill 3427 \(2019\)\)](#) enacted a modified corporate activities tax and required half of the resulting revenue to be distributed to school districts and certain charter schools in the form of noncompetitive grants. In order to access those grants, districts must submit a plan for use of the funds that fall into the following four allowable use categories: increased learning time, reduced class sizes and caseloads, well-rounded educational opportunities, and student health and safety. Districts must engage their communities in formulating their plans, and local boards must allow opportunity for public comment before adoption of their plans.

Districts and eligible charter schools that receive funding are responsible for meeting growth targets in four areas: graduation and completion rates, the percentage of students finishing ninth grade with six or more credits toward graduation, the percentage of students completing third grade reading proficiently, and the percentage of students who miss less than 10 percent of school days. In each of these areas, school districts and eligible charter schools are responsible for lifting overall rates as well as decreasing gaps for historically underserved students. Each year, district leadership must present the district's progress to the local school board both orally and in writing, and the school board must allow opportunity for public comment.

School districts that do not meet their annual growth targets in these areas receive coaching assistance from contractors hired by ODE.

ODE must identify and select school districts with a long track record of achievement gaps to participate in an intensive program. Student Success Teams, contracted by ODE, will study those districts' needs and operations, and provide a set of recommended changes. Districts that agree to enter the program receive extra funding and must agree to implement the team's recommendations relating to expenditures of the Student Success Act's Student Investment Account (SIA) grants and the extra funding. These districts must also issue a report to all district employees and enrolled families outlining the team's recommendations and the district's implementation plans.

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## APPENDIX A: Division 22 Standards

581-022-0102 Definitions	581-022-2130 Kindergarten Assessment	581-022-2325 Identification of Academically Talented and Intellectually Gifted Students
581-022-0620 Test Development	581-022-2205 Policies on Reporting of Child Abuse	581-022-2330 Rights of Parents of Talented and Gifted Students
581-022-1512 Child Development Specialist Programs	581-022-2210 Anabolic Steroids and Performance Enhancing Substances	581-022-2335 Daily Class Size
581-022-1910 Exemptions	581-022-2215 Safety of School Sports – Concussions	581-022-2340 Media Programs
581-022-1920 Waivers	581-022-2220 Health Services	581-022-2345 Auxiliary Services
581-022-2000 Diploma Requirements	581-022-2223 Healthy and Safe Schools Plan	581-022-2350 Independent Adoptions of Instructional Materials
581-022-2010 Modified Diploma	581-022-2225 Emergency Plans and Safety Programs	581-022-2355 Instructional Materials Adoption
581-022-2015 Extended Diploma	581-022-2230 Asbestos Management Plans	581-022-2360 Postponement of Purchase of State-Adopted Instructional Materials
581-022-2020 Alternative Certificate	581-022-2250 District Continuous Improvement Plan	581-022-2370 Complaint Procedures
581-022-2025 Credit Options	581-022-2255 School and District Performance Report Criteria	581-022-2400 Personnel
581-022-2030 District Curriculum	581-022-2260 Records and Reports	581-022-2405 Personnel Policies
581-022-2045 Prevention Education in Drugs and Alcohol	581-022-2265 Report on Physical Education Data	581-022-2410 Teacher and Administrator Evaluation and Support
581-022-2050 Human Sexuality Education	581-022-2270 Individual Student Assessment, Recordkeeping and Reporting	581-022-2415 Core Teaching Standards
581-022-2055 Career Education	581-022-2300 Standardization	581-022-2420 Educational Leadership – Administrator Standards
581-022-2060 Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling	581-022-2305 Operating Policies and Procedures	581-022-2430 Fingerprinting of Subject Individuals in Positions Not Requiring Licensure
581-022-2100 Administration of State Assessments	581-022-2310 Equal Education Opportunities	581-022-2440 Teacher Training Related to Dyslexia
581-022-2110 Exception of Students with Disabilities from State Assessment Testing	581-022-2315 Special Education for Children with Disabilities	581-022-2500 Programs and Services for Talented and Gifted Students
581-022-2115 Assessment of Essential Skills	581-022-2320 Required Instructional Time	581-022-2505 Alternative Education Programs
581-022-2120 Essential Skill Assessments for English Language Learners		

Source: Legislative Policy and Research Office  
Data from the Oregon Department of Education