

# Summary of Massachusetts’ District and School Accountability System

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## Background

In 2018, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) began reporting accountability results under its new framework for district and school accountability and assistance, which was first approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) in June 2018.

## Accountability and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) invited states to apply for a waiver of the accountability requirements of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years and the assessment requirements for the 2019-2020 school year. Massachusetts requested and received these waivers. As a result, DESE has not implemented all aspects of our statewide accountability system since fall 2019.

In December 2021, ED offered states another opportunity to request certain modifications to their accountability systems for the 2021-2022 school year via an addendum to the ESEA Consolidated State Plan. Massachusetts applied and received approval for its request to temporarily modify our accountability system for one year. Given the challenges of the last two years, we believe that the addendum provides us with the opportunity to reestablish the baseline for future accountability reporting using data from the 2021-2022 school year, while still meeting federal requirements.

## Plans for 2022 Accountability Reporting

In the fall of 2022, DESE will produce some, but not all, of the information associated with annual district and school accountability determinations. Under this “accountability lite” model, we intend to publish district, school, and student group-level performance data for each of the approved accountability indicators, as well as certain normative measures (e.g., school percentiles) that help districts, schools, DESE, and the public assess the performance of all districts and schools using common measures. The availability of this information will also continue to help communities and the state decide how to assign resources and other assistance.

Under the “accountability lite” model, we will not publish indicator targets, points for progress towards targets, progress ratings, or determinations of each district’s and school’s need for assistance or intervention. These aspects of the traditional state accountability system would be reconsidered for future accountability reporting cycles.

## Accountability System Elements

A description of each of the key elements that DESE will include in its district and school accountability results following the 2021-2022 school year is included below.

### **Accountability Indicators**

Detailed district-, school-, and student group-level results will be reported for each of the following accountability indicators:

Indicator	Measure
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English language arts (ELA) achievement</li> <li>• Mathematics achievement</li> <li>• Science achievement</li> </ul>
Student Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)</li> <li>• Mathematics mean SGP</li> </ul>
High School Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four-year cohort graduation rate</li> <li>• Extended engagement rate (five-year cohort graduation rate plus the percentage of students from the cohort who are still enrolled)</li> <li>• Annual dropout rate</li> </ul>
English Language Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress made by students towards attaining English language proficiency (percentage of students meeting annual targets calculated to attain English proficiency in six years)</li> </ul>
Additional Indicator(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students missing 20 percent<sup>1</sup> or more of their days in membership)</li> <li>• Percentage of 11<sup>th</sup> &amp; 12<sup>th</sup> graders completing advanced coursework (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Project Lead the Way, dual enrollment courses, Chapter 74-approved vocational/technical secondary cooperative education programs, and other selected rigorous courses)</li> </ul>

In order to report indicator results for any district, school, or group, there must be data for at least 20 students.

**Weighting of Accountability Indicators**

Federal law requires that substantial weight be given to the achievement, growth, English language proficiency, and graduation rate indicators, and that when taken together, these indicators should have much greater weight than the additional indicators.

In June 2018, the Board approved DESE’s proposal to use a 3 to 1 ratio of achievement to growth, consistent with the weightings shown in the tables below. By using this approach, DESE can ensure that the ratio of achievement to growth remains consistent, but allow for flexibility in the actual percentages where necessary (e.g., to accommodate districts and schools that have data for the English language proficiency indicator and those that do not). For 2022 reporting, DESE intends to apply the same indicator weightings within the accountability calculations. Note that at the high school level, the high

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<sup>1</sup> The 2022 chronic absenteeism rate used in 2022 accountability results will include student who miss 20 percent or more of their days in membership. Chronic absenteeism rates for other years represent the percentage of student who missed 10 percent or more of their days in membership.

school completion indicators are considered part of achievement when calculating the ratio of achievement to growth.

#### Accountability Indicator Weightings – Non-High Schools

Indicator	Measures	Weighting (3:1)	
		With EL	No EL
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA, math, &amp; science achievement</li> </ul>	60%	67.5%
Student Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA &amp; math SGP</li> </ul>	20%	22.5%
English Language Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress made by students towards attaining English language proficiency</li> </ul>	10%	--
Additional Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic absenteeism</li> </ul>	10%	10%

#### Accountability Indicator Weightings – High Schools & Middle-High/K-12 Schools

Indicator	Measures	Weighting (3:1)	
		With EL	No EL
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA, math, &amp; science achievement</li> </ul>	40%	47.5%
Student Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA &amp; math SGP</li> </ul>	20%	22.5%
High School Completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four-year cohort graduation rate</li> <li>• Extended engagement rate</li> <li>• Annual dropout rate</li> </ul>	20%	20%
English Language Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress made by students towards attaining English language proficiency</li> </ul>	10%	--
Additional Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic absenteeism</li> <li>• Advanced coursework completion</li> </ul>	10%	10%

#### Normative Component

The 2022 accountability result for schools will consist of a normative component, or accountability percentile, which measures the performance of all students in a school compared to other schools in the state. This measure is reported as a percentile, from 1 to 99, which is calculated using all available accountability indicators for a school. Schools are grouped together based on the statewide assessments that they administer: *non-high schools*, serving a combination of grades 3 through 8; *middle-high and K-12 schools*, serving one or more grades 3 through 8 and grade 10; and *high schools*, where the only tested grade is grade 10. Within each grouping, each school's performance on each indicator is ranked and weighted according to the weighting rules described above. The resulting accountability percentile provides information about how a school is doing compared to other schools administering similar assessments.

For the purposes of accountability reporting, the accountability percentile is calculated only at the school level, for the *all students* group; it is not calculated at the district level.

In the calculation of the 2022 accountability percentile, DESE uses two years of data. Data from each year is weighted in the overall percentile calculation, placing more weight on data from the most recent year:

Measures	Year 1 (40%)	Year 2 (60%)
ELA, math, & science achievement	2019	2022
ELA & math SGP	2019	2022
Four-year cohort graduation rate	2020	2021
Extended engagement rate	2019	2020
Annual dropout rate	2020	2021
Progress made by students towards attaining English language proficiency	2020	2022
Chronic absenteeism	2019	2022
Advanced coursework completion	2021	2022

For the assessment and chronic absenteeism indicators, the calculation includes 2022 data and the most recently available pre-pandemic data (i.e., 2019 MCAS data, 2020 ACCESS data, and 2019 chronic absenteeism data). For all other indicators, the calculation includes the most recently available two years of data.

### Student Group Reporting

To meet federal reporting requirements and to ensure transparency in our public reporting efforts, DESE reports accountability results at the student group level.

#### Accountability Student Groups

In addition to reporting results for each district or school as a whole, accountability results are reported for the following 11 student groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; African American or Black; Hispanic or Latino; Multi-race, non-Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; White; low income students<sup>2</sup>; students with disabilities; current and former English learners (ELs); and high needs

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<sup>2</sup> Since fall 2021, DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged student group and instead reports data for a [newly defined low income student group](#). In the 2022 accountability results, the 2022 data for accountability indicators includes students who meet the new definition of low income. Earlier data for accountability indicators includes who students who were previously identified as economically disadvantaged. This change also affects the high needs student group.

students (an unduplicated count of students who are low income, students with disabilities, and/or ELs and former ELs). In order to report data for a group, there must be results for at least 20 students.

### **Student Group Results**

For each student group in a school, DESE calculates a student group percentile. The student group percentile measures the student group's relative standing compared to like student groups in the same gradespan grouping statewide (e.g., by comparing results from the students with disabilities group in one high school to all other students with disabilities groups in high schools statewide). The student group percentile is calculated using the same process as the normative accountability percentile described above: by ranking data from all available accountability indicators for each student group and combining them into a single, final percentile value, from 1 to 99. This allows DESE to identify schools in which the performance of the school as a whole may be masking the performance of one or more low performing groups. Student group percentiles are calculated only for schools; they are not calculated for districts.

### **Assessment Participation**

State and federal laws require high levels of student participation in statewide assessments. For each district and school as a whole, assessment participation rates are calculated separately for ELA, mathematics, and science. At the group level, assessment participation is calculated for the group as a whole, with all subjects combined (e.g., measuring the percentage of individual ELA, math, and science tests combined taken by the group). This approach minimizes the effect of a small number of non-participants in small student groups. For 2022 accountability reporting, all districts, schools, and groups are expected to maintain a 2022 participation rate of 95 percent or higher.

### **Categorization of Schools**

Most schools will not receive an overall accountability determination in 2022. However, schools that were previously identified as *underperforming* or *chronically underperforming* will maintain that designation until the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education determines that their designation should be removed. Additionally, 2022 accountability reports for schools may contain the following information:

- If the school has one or more low performing student groups (one or more groups among the lowest performing 5 percent of like student groups statewide, as measured by the student group percentile);
- If the school has a low graduation rate (below 66.7 percent); and/or
- If the school as a whole or one or more of its student groups has low assessment participation rates (below 95 percent).

Consistent with state law and regulations, the Commissioner maintains the authority to name new *underperforming* or *chronically underperforming* schools.

## Categorization of Districts

Most districts will not receive an overall accountability determination in 2022. However, districts that were previously named *chronically underperforming* will maintain that designation until the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, upon the recommendation of the Commissioner, determines that their designation should be removed. Additionally, 2022 accountability reports for districts may contain information related to low assessment participation, if the district as a whole or one or more of its student groups has an assessment participation rate below 95 percent.

Consistent with state law and regulations, the Board maintains the authority to name new *underperforming* or *chronically underperforming* districts upon the recommendation of the Commissioner.

## Federal Requirements

As a condition of approval of the 2021 accountability waiver, DESE must resume our practice of issuing federal designations in the fall of 2022 using data from the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 school years. Federal designations, which are incorporated into the state’s accountability system, include:

- *Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)*: The lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools statewide, and any high school with a graduation rate below 66.7 percent
- *Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)*: Any school with one or more student groups that are among the lowest performing 5 percent of student groups statewide for two consecutive years
- *Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)*: Any TSI school with one or more identified student groups demonstrating performance below that of the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile Title I school

The Department has been assigning these designations to schools since 2018 and will continue to do under the “accountability lite” approach. With this approach, we can reset the baseline for future accountability determinations using data from the 2021-2022 school year while still fulfilling our federal reporting obligations and making basic information about school performance available to districts, schools, and the public.