

# Public School (K-12) Accountability



## Executive Summary

High-quality schools are important both for individual success and for overall economic growth for the U.S. School accountability measures such as Annual Performance Reports (APRs) are a way to measure school success and identify schools that need improvement. [House Bill 2652](#) would make several changes to the weighting of school performance measurements in APRs and add reporting requirements. It also includes a requirement for schools consistently in the bottom 5% of APR scores to be closed or “reconstituted in partnership with a high-quality charter school organization”.

## Highlights

- Traditional (district) and magnet public schools are locally governed by school boards and are held accountable to state education standards through accreditation by the State Board of Education.
- The Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 6) has the responsibility of reviewing and accrediting the public school districts in Missouri. They do so based on Annual Performance Reports (APRs).
- Many states use additional measures of school quality such as chronic absenteeism, college and career readiness measures, and school climate measures (e.g., suspension and discipline rates).

## Limitations

- Because there are many different outcomes from schools that stakeholders value (e.g., academic performance, lifetime earnings, critical thinking, etc.) it is difficult to determine the ideal combination of assessments and other measures to determine if a school is being successful and/or if it needs additional help in certain areas.
- There is a lack of research on the effects of different accountability measure weightings on student outcomes.

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## Research Background

### Public School Accountability in Missouri

There are three different types of public schools in Missouri: traditional public schools, magnet schools, and charter schools. Traditional public schools are held accountable (i.e., monitored and possibly targeted for intervention) at the federal level by the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA), at the state level by Departments and Boards of Education, and at the local level by school boards and district leadership. Though different in admissions policies and curricular

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focus, magnet schools are governed and held accountable similarly to traditional public schools. Charter schools, in contrast, have different governance structures and are exempt from several of the rules and regulations used for traditional public and magnet schools. For more information on charter schools, see our Science Note on [Charter School Accountability](#).

<b>Table 1. Accreditation % Determinants.<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>District APR Score</b>	<b>Accreditation Level</b>
≥95%	Accredited with Distinction
70% - 94.9%	Accredited
50% - 69.9%	Provisionally Accredited
<50%	Unaccredited

Traditional and magnet public schools are governed at the local level by school boards and are held accountable through accreditation status by the State Board of Education (RSMo [161.092](#)) which submits annual reports to the General Assembly. The State Board of Education uses [Annual Performance Reports](#) (APRs) to review schools and determine accreditation status for school districts. For school districts, APRs are used to determine a school’s accreditation status, while charter school APRs are primarily used to determine reauthorization or closure. From 2012–2021, APRs were created using the fifth version of the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 5).<sup>2</sup> A new iteration, MSIP 6, was implemented in February 2022.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Table 2. Accreditation Score Components.<sup>1</sup></b>			
<b>Performance Score</b>		<b>Continuous Improvement Score</b>	
Achievement Status: Overall	16%	Improvement Planning: Plan	18%
Achievement Status: Student Groups	12%	Improvement Planning: Self-Study to Standards	4%
Achievement Growth: Overall	12%	Improvement Planning: Survey	2%
Achievement Growth: Student Groups	8%	Success-Ready*	6%
Success-Ready*	10%	<b>Total</b>	<b>30%</b>
Graduation Rate	10%	*Success-Ready is a component in both sections, combined it is 16% of the total score	
Follow-up	2%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70%</b>		

The MSIP 5 was made up of five performance standards: 1) academic achievement, 2) subgroup achievement, 3) high school readiness (HSR) or College and Career Readiness (CCR), 4) attendance, and 5) graduation rates. With the MSIP 6, school districts are given APR accreditation scores which will determine accreditation levels (Table 1). Additionally, school districts that score as Accredited will be automatically reviewed for Distinction which means 70–94.9% APR scored schools are still eligible for Distinction.

Seventy percent of accreditation scores are based on a performance score and thirty percent are based on a continuous improvement score. Both scores will be based on several different components as shown in Table 2. For more information on specific components, see the [MSIP 6 Comprehensive Guide](#).

### **School Quality Measures**

High-quality schools are important both for individual success and for overall economic growth of the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Recent changes to federal accountability rules give states more control and thus responsibility for school systems.<sup>4</sup> Measuring school quality is typically done with standardized assessments and other measures such as graduation rates, participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, and other measures. Factors other than test scores can also have large effects on student outcomes. For example, graduating high school can significantly increase earnings.<sup>5</sup> A [report](#) of state accountability measures by the Education Commission of the States found that many states use additional measures of school quality commonly called [School Quality and Student Success Indicators](#) (SQSS).<sup>6</sup> In the report, 36 states include chronic absenteeism measures, 37 states include college and career readiness measures, and 12 states use school climate measures (e.g., suspension and discipline rates). College and career readiness in different states is typically determined by scores on college placement exams (e.g., ACT and SAT) with some states also including participation in career training programs, typically measured at the high school level.<sup>6</sup>

Because there are many different outcomes from schools that stakeholders value (e.g., academic performance, lifetime earnings, critical thinking, etc.) it is difficult to determine the ideal combination of assessments and other measures to determine if a school is being successful and/or if it needs additional help in certain areas.<sup>7</sup> A study of increases in school accountability in the 1990s found that introduced accountability systems were associated with higher academic growth.<sup>8</sup> However, there is a lack of research on the effects of different accountability measure weightings on student outcomes. Clear communication of school accountability is often seen as an important factor in allowing stakeholders to make informed decisions. Some states such as Arkansas, Arizona, and Louisiana have adopted A-F grading schemes for schools which are proposed as a way to make understanding school quality easier.

The results of standardized tests are often analyzed in multiple ways to determine student proficiency, student growth, and to determine achievement gaps between subgroups. The Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) provides a [public online dashboard](#) with access to school assessment data. Outside groups have analyzed DESE data to

produce their own assessments of Missouri Schools. The PRiME Center at Saint Louis University publishes the [Missouri Regional Student Growth Report](#) that assigns scores to schools based on student growth.<sup>9</sup> The Show-Me Institute publishes the [Missouri School Rankings Project](#) which provides school scores based on six measures.<sup>10</sup>

An ongoing issue in education is achievement gaps between different groups based on race, socio-economic status, and disability status. Federal law (ESSA) requires states to measure achievement differences between subgroups and many states include the achievement of subgroups in accountability measures. For more information on achievement and opportunity gaps, see our Science Note on [Education Opportunity Gaps](#).

### State Takeovers in Low Performing Schools

In some states, including Missouri, the state can take over management of schools that are deemed to be underperforming. For example, in 2014 Normandy School District in St. Louis County was dissolved and reorganized by the state. Takeovers of traditional public schools sometimes involve conversions into charter schools such as what happened to New Orleans public schools after Hurricane Katrina. Research on state takeovers of schools between 2011 to 2016 found no consistent evidence of academic benefits for students from the change of control over the short-term.<sup>11</sup> However, the study only included a six-year window so it is unknown what the long-term effects of state takeovers might be.

### **Proposed Legislation**

Proposed in the 2022 Missouri Legislative Session, [HB 2652](#) would make several changes to the methods by which Missouri public schools (including charter schools) are held accountable. The proposed bill would hold different types of public schools (e.g., district or charter) accountable identically using APRs. Under this bill, accreditation status would still only be determined for school districts, not for individual schools. It also does not change existing charter school renewal procedures (RSMo [640.405](#)). Reporting requirements in the proposed legislation would require data from individual schools rather than the school district. Second, it would change scoring percentages for annual performance reports of schools. Specifically, 80% or more of the scoring metric would be based on state standardized test scores and student growth. With the current MSIP 6, academic achievement and growth are 70% of the score (Figure 2). The remaining portion of the score would largely come from college and career readiness, student attendance, and graduation rates. The existing MSIP 6 and the proposed legislation both include achievement and growth measures with similar APR weightings as is used in several other states (e.g., AK, CN, FL).<sup>6</sup>

School districts with more than half of their schools in the bottom 5% of statewide annual performance reports would be deemed unaccredited or provisionally accredited. These schools would be required to create research-based improvement plans in partnership with independent experts that include three-year goals for math and reading proficiency. Improvement plans would be required to have growth goals for different subgroups and grade

levels and would require input from parents and teachers. Schools in the bottom 5% would also be required to mail letters to parents/guardians regarding the school's designation. Additionally, these schools would be encouraged to join innovation zones. See [School Innovation Waivers](#) Science Note for more information about innovation zones. If schools remained in the bottom 5% for four years in a row they would “reconstituted in partnership with a high-quality charter school organization or be closed”. Students attending such schools would be allowed to transfer to other schools in the same school district. See [Interdistrict Open Enrollment](#) Science Note for information about potential challenges related to non-neighborhood school access.

Other changes to the Missouri educational system in [HB 2652](#) include expanding the [Visiting Scholar Program](#) to allow teaching certificates to be issued to individuals filling vacant positions in hard-to-staff subject areas or schools. Additionally, differentiated teacher pay would be allowed in hard-to-staff subject areas and schools to pay certain teachers more as a recruitment and retention tool. For more information, see our Science Notes on [Teacher Certification & Permits](#) and [Teacher Retention & Recruitment](#).

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