

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

IOWA

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State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.

Iowa is one of the few states that does not have a mandated statewide testing program. However, nearly all Iowa public school districts voluntarily participate in the student achievement testing offered through the Iowa Testing Programs at the University of Iowa.

2. What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)* In most cases, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Iowa Test of Educational Development
- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested* Two test batteries are offered by the Iowa Testing Program: the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for grades 3 – 8, and the Iowa Test of Educational Development for grades 9 – 12. The ITBS battery contains 13 specific tests: Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Capitalization, Punctuation, Spelling, Language Usage and Expression, Mathematics Concepts and Estimation, Mathematics Problem Solving and Data Interpretation, Mathematics Computation, Social Studies, Maps and Diagrams, and Reference Materials.

- *Norm or Criterion Referenced* Iowa Testing Program tests are norm-referenced, however, ITP does provide some information that might allow district to make criterion-referenced interpretations. Districts may administer their own criterion-referenced exams if they wish.
- *Matrix or Census Testing* Districts are required to report performance data for all students.
- *Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.* Varies with tests, mostly multiple choice.
- *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)* Varies with districts, generally in the spring.
- *High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline)* No exit exam
- *Other Assessments* ACT, AP, SAT, NWEA criterion-referenced tests, New Standards reference exams.
- *Transitional or Final Assessment System* Final

3. *Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state?*

- *State Department of Education*
- *Commercial Testing Organization*
- *State teachers and administrators*
- *Assessment Committee*
- *Other*

If a commercial test was used by the state, were modifications or additions made to the assessment to address state requirements or standards? If so, what did they include?

The ITBS and ITSD were developed by Iowa Testing Programs. Other assessments may be developed by teachers, administrators, or other testing organizations.

4. *What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?*

The state requires districts to report assessment data for students in the following subjects and grades:

- Reading (grades 4, 8, and 11)
- Math (grades 4, 8, 11)
- Science (grades 8, 11)

Hence, districts should conduct assessments in these areas. The selection of the test is at the district's discretion.

5. *Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards? Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned?*

- *Refining standards*
- *Revamping assessments*
- *Adding components to assessments* Area education agencies help districts look at local standards that have been established and to develop "testlets" that match standards; districts can choose from these.

6. *What is the state's approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?*

Districts are encouraged and expected to look at the norm-referenced test they use, analyze the skills that are assessed, and to match these with district standards and benchmarks. As they develop assessments, or select for purchase other multiple measures, they should go through the same process.

7. *How is the data included in the state assessment system used?*

- *Student Grade Promotion/Retention, Graduation, Diploma Certification*
- *Teacher, School and/or District accountability*
- *Program Evaluation (Identify federal, state programs)*
- *Identification of students for programs like Title I, state CompEd, Bilingual, etc.*
- *Instructional guidance to local administrators and/or teachers*
- *School improvement (e.g., preparing a school improvement plan)*

The Iowa Testing program reports data to the state, this data is primarily used for instructional guidance and school improvement. In certain circumstances, the data may be used for program evaluation, or for placement of students in certain programs, such as T/G. Test scores are not used for promotion or retention or other high stakes purposes.

8. *Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?*

No changes are anticipated.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment?*

A major challenge for Iowa has been to defend their position of not administering a state-wide assessment program, in face of criticism from outside the state.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. *What exclusions are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?*

It is the policy of the State of Iowa that all students with disabilities will be included in assessments, with appropriate accommodations and modifications in administration as needed. The state has developed the following procedures for determining if students can participate in assessments:

Determine which of the following statement best describes the student's curriculum and then determine the appropriate assessment approach:

- Does the student participate with no or only slight modification in general academic curriculum? The students should participate in district wide assessment.
- Does the student participate with significant modification to the general academic curriculum? The student should participate in district wide assessment.
- Does the student not participate in the general academic curriculum? Student receives an alternative curriculum. The student should participate in alternate assessment.

2. *What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?*

Accommodations and modifications should be provided as necessary.

3. *Does the state provide assessments in languages other than English? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?*

The state does not offer assessments in languages other than English, however, a resource document has been developed by ESL personnel within the Department of Education to provide guidelines on the assessment of LEP students.

4. *Does the state provide alternative assessments for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?*

The Iowa Department of Education will have an alternate assessment developed and implemented beginning not later than July 1, 2000.

5. *Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?*

Yes, the state of Iowa has the goal of full inclusion for students with disabilities and low English proficiency.

6. *Are changes planned in the for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?*

A decision-making process is being finalized to provide guidance for districts as they move towards the full inclusion of SWD and LEP students.

Performance Standards

1. *How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?*

Schools or school districts may establish their own performance levels for district-wide assessments in reading and mathematics or they may choose to use the achievement levels reported by the Iowa Testing Programs when reporting achievement results using the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED). Since 1996-97, the Iowa Testing Program has provided reports on individual schools and school systems using achievement levels. ITP established cut scores in conjunction with the agreement with Federal Title I: the performance level “low” is 1-40, “intermediate” is 41-89, “high” is 90-99.

Many districts have opted to use the performance levels established by the Iowa Testing Program. If the achievement levels for ITBS and ITED are used for reporting, a district/school may not change the span of the levels for reporting purposes. There are no achievement levels established in science for ITBS/ITED; therefore, each district/school must decide on at least three achievement/performance levels for their reporting of science achievement on at least one district-wide assessment measure at grades 8 and 11.

Following is an example of the verbal definitions of three performance levels developed by the Iowa Testing Program:

Low Performance Level: Understands little factual information; seldom draws conclusions or makes simple inferences about characters; rarely grasps the main idea, evaluates the style and structure of the text, or interprets nonliteral language.

Intermediate Performance Level: Understands some factual information; sometimes can draw conclusions and make inferences about the motives and feelings of characters; and is beginning to be able to identify the main idea, evaluate the style and structure of the text, and interpret nonliteral language.

High Performance Level: Understands factual information; draws conclusions and makes inferences about the motives and feelings of characters; identifies the main idea; evaluates the style and structure of the text; and interprets nonliteral language.

2. Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, dropout rates or other measures?

Iowa has not set acceptable levels or targets for educational performance. However, districts set their own growth targets in their comprehensive school improvement plans, which are due to the Department of Education each September. For further information, see the sections on Accountability or Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress.

3. How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?

This varies by district.

4. Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?

As required by Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 12, all public and accredited nonpublic schools shall report annually to the Department of Education. The reports to the public will include:

- 1) Aggregated data that include the performance of children with disabilities together with all children; and
- 2) Disaggregated data on the performance of children with disabilities.

5. Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

No changes are anticipated

6. What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?

Unknown.

Reporting Performance Data

1. Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:

- *Student reports* The state does not produce student reports but districts may request this information from ITP.
- *School reports* School level data is to be included in the district reports, see below.
- *District reports* Iowa Administrative Code 281-12.8 (3) requires each school district and accredited nonpublic school to submit an Annual Progress report to its local community, its respective AEA, and the Department of Education. This report includes, at a minimum, progress with the state indicators and other locally determined indicators. Required indicators include the following:
 - Percentage of students in grades 4, 8, and 11 achieving proficient or higher in reading, math, and science status using at least three achievement levels and disaggregated
 - Percentage of students considered as dropouts for grades 7 – 12 reported by gender, race, and students with disabilities
 - Percentage of seniors who intend to pursue postsecondary studies or training
 - Percentage of students achieving a score or status on a measure that indicates probable postsecondary success
 - Percentage of high school graduates who complete a core program of secondary studies.

- *State reports* Each year the state produces the Condition of Education report, which includes the following information: ITBS average composite scores for grades 3- 8; ITBS Reading Comprehension by performance level for grade 4; ITBS Reading Achievement disaggregated by gender for grades 4, 8, and 11; ITBS Mathematics Achievement disaggregated by gender for grades 4, 8, and 11; ACT state averages and national rank; ACT composite scores by gender; AP scores at state and national level and by gender; postsecondary enrollment options and courses; dropouts by enrollment category, gender, and race.
- *Title I reports* Iowa produces an Annual Performance Report for Title I including staff data, participation rates, statistics on schoolwide and targeted assistance schools, student achievement data, disaggregated.

2. *How are the data distributed? When during the year (month or time period after assessment)? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?*

Annual Progress reports must be made public to the local community. Some districts do so on the internet, others in local news media.

3. *At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards)?*

- *Gender*
- *Race*
- *LEP status*
- *Migrant Status*
- *SWD*
- *SES*

Disaggregated data in state Condition of Education report: dropout rate by gender and race. Disaggregated data required in Annual Progress Reports from districts: reading, math, and science scores by gender, race, F/R lunch, SWD, Migrant, ELL.

4. *Does trend data exist from the state assessments?*

The Condition of Education report illustrates trends on ITBS and ACT results since 1985; AP scores since 1990.

5. *How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?*

The Iowa Department of Education, in conjunction with area education agencies (AEAs) will collect statewide data reflecting the percent of students with disabilities participating in each type of assessment.

The State of Iowa, local education agencies and AEAs will make available to the public, and report to the public with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment

of nondisabled children in accordance with the state's general accreditation standards, the following information:

1. The number of children with disabilities participating: a) in regular assessments; and b) in alternate assessments.
2. The performance results of the children with disabilities if doing so would be statistically sound and would not result in the disclosure of performance results identifiable to individual children: a) on regular assessments; and b) on alternate assessments (not later than July 1, 2000).

As required by Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 12, all public and accredited nonpublic schools shall report annually to the Department of Education. The reports to the public will include:

- 1) Aggregated data that include the performance of children with disabilities together with all children; and
- 2) Disaggregated data on the performance of children with disabilities.

LEAs are not required to report to the public disaggregated data if the group is less than 10 children.

6. What are the state's requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?

The state expects districts to use assessment data when establishing appropriate progress goals and when developing the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

7. Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?

The reporting system, linked to the accountability system is new and changes are not anticipated.

8. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.

No issues or challenges were identified.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.

Iowa is in transition to a new accountability system based on accreditation and the development of two reports which must be submitted to the state and made public to local communities and Area Education Agencies (AEAs). The two reports are to be developed together so that local growth targets can match community needs, and so that the public is aware of local progress, trends and goals.

2. What are the characteristics of the state accountability system?

The state accountability system is not based on sanctions and rewards, but on building capacity and encouraging growth.

Each accredited nonpublic school or school district should establish an annual improvement goal(s) for reading, mathematics, and science by reviewing at least two years of achievement data in order to determine a realistic improvement goal. This goal can be established by averaging two years of data for a particular grade, setting a goal for a particular grade, or by following a cohort of students from one grade level to the next such as third to fourth grade.

Progress towards the annual improvement goal using achievement data is to be reported to the community. If the district data demonstrates that last year's annual improvement goals were not met, the actions that a district intends to take to meet the goals should be reported to the community in the APR.

3. What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?

- *Relative growth*
- *Absolute target*
- *Narrowing the Gap between high and low achievers*
- *Other* This is determined at the local level, depending on where progress is needed, and may include any of the above.

4. Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded?

Students should not be systematically excluded from progress data, but subgroup performance may be considered.

5. How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?

State accountability and Title I accountability are the same: Iowa intends for all schools and districts to work for common goals.

6. Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?

The improvement goals may be established for all students and/or may be established for particular subgroups of students that are performing below local expectations. Improvement goals may be stated to include all grade levels or for a particular grade level or transition levels. The establishment of annual improvement goals is a local decision that should be made by examining the data and deciding where the greatest progress is needed.

7. Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?

All accredited public districts, nonpublic schools, and attendance centers that house grades 4, 8, and 11 must report on the state indicators.

8. *Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

The system of requiring a CSIP and APR is new for the academic year 1999-2000 and further changes are not anticipated.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.*

Iowa is in the process of implementing a new accountability system, and hence faces the challenges that are associated with this process: educating administrators about the new program, communicating changes to education stake-holders, etc.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. *How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?*

The Iowa system for identifying low performing schools is no different for Title I schools or non Title I schools, except for the provision of Title I funds. For more additional information on this topic, please refer to the section on Title I, below.

2. *Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?*

Districts have the responsibility - and extensive discretion - of determining if they have met their own progress goals. If they have not met their goals after one year the state will provide some assistance for improvement, the second year the school/district is designated “in need of improvement” (if the school is Title I, it is then eligible for Title I funds), after the third year they must undergo a self-study and work with the department to address the progress goals.

3. *What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?*

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

Evaluation, Planning, and expert assistance are the main types of assistance that are provided to schools and districts.

4. *Who provides the state assistance?*

- *School/district support teams*
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators*
- *SDE staff*

- *Other – Explain*

Area Education Agencies provide a great deal of this support. The six core service areas required of AEAs include Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, Instructional Media, School Technology, Special Education and School-Community Planning; along with a seventh area, Discretionary Services.

5. Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?

Support provided to Title I and all low performing schools is very similar, with the exception that Title I schools are eligible for Title I funds.

6. Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?

This is generally at the discretion of the district.

7. Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare? Who are they submitted to once completed? How do they differ from other planning documents?

Schools in need of improvement must address deficiencies in the Annual Progress Report and Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, however, these reports are required in any case. In the third year of poor performance, they must undergo a self-study with the state to address areas in need of improvement.

8. Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

No changes are anticipated.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?

- *What measures are used (relationship between cognitive/non-cognitive data)?* Iowa has negotiated with the Department of Education to allow for local control in Title I assessment. Most districts have opted for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills or the Iowa Test of Educational Development. The districts determine the proficiency levels.
- *What targets have been established?* Districts determine their own goals for annual progress and five-year progress, this is the basis of AYP.
- *Are local assessment systems included as criteria? If so, does the state provide guidance? Monitor their use?* There is local control in Title I assessment. Area Education Agencies provide some oversight and guidance.

- *Is subgroup performance included in the criteria?* Districts have discretion: they often do set progress goals for subgroups.
2. *What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:*
- *Title I schools and non-Title I schools* Same definition: the state does not believe in setting a separate goal for Title I schools, everyone should be working for the same target.
 - *Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools:* Non public schools have the same reporting and goal-setting requirements as do public schools.
 - *Districts* Districts set their own goals at determine if they have met them.
- Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?*

Iowa is moving towards final definition: in the past Title I reporting and accountability was separate, and districts were not required to report on individual schools. Now the systems are essentially being merged, and all schools are being held to common progress goals, whether Title I or not.

3. *What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the districts plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?*

Districts are required to report to the state on the performance of Title I schools; this data is reported on the Annual Progress Report. Districts then determine which schools have made adequate yearly progress. (In the past, districts only reported district-level data to the state, this is the first year that they are required to report school-level data as well.)

4. *What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?*

Iowa negotiated a compromise with the Department of Education, which they refer to as the “Iowa Model.” Under the Iowa Model, the reporting requirements and accountability requirements for districts and schools will be the same, regardless of Title I status. The only difference will be if the school is not making progress over two years, they “get a visit from the state” receive advice and assistance, and can then access Title I school improvements funds.

Essentially, districts have the responsibility of determining if they have met their own progress goals. If they have not met their goals after one year the state will provide some assistance for improvement, the second year the school is designated “in need of improvement” and if Title I can access Title I funds, after the third year they must undergo a self-study and work with the department to address the progress goals.

5. *What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?*
- *Evaluation and Planning*
 - *Financial*
 - *Expert Assistance*

Area Education Agencies provide technical assistance in developing Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, in addition, Title I school improvement funds may be used for those schools or districts that are in need of improvement.

6. *Who provides the assistance?*

- *School/district support teams* Area Education Agencies
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators* Not fully developed in Iowa
- *SDE staff* Title I consultants, school improvement consultants
- *Other – Explain* Colleges and universities

7. *Have waivers played a role in this process?*

Waivers have not played a significant role in Iowa.

8. *Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

There are no imminent plans for changes, the state feels current procedures match Title I requirements fairly well.

9. *Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?*

Yes: the Title I and non-Title I systems are essentially one and the same.

10. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.*

The same issues that apply to the state apply to Title I: issues concerning the development of standards and assessments at the district level, the work involved in their implementation, the length of the process, defending Iowa's decision to keep these educational components at the local level.

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Title I

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