

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

MISSISSIPPI

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All information is current as of that date.*

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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.*

Used between 1994 and 1998, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered in grades 4 through 8 and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) were administered in grade 9, using both multiple choice (reading, math, language arts) and performance components (integrated language arts and mathematics). Subject area tests and the Functional Literacy Examination (FLE) were used to determine high school level proficiency. In the summer of 1999, the state began the design and approval process for a new assessment system, including the Terra Nova, a new criterion-referenced assessment and new subject area tests that will eventually replace the FLE as the requirement for students to graduate high school.

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

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s):* The Mississippi Assessment System
- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested:*

1. Grade Level Testing Program (GLTP)

- **Grades 2 - 8: Grade Level Criterion Referenced Test**

This will include criterion-referenced tests in reading, math and language arts. In the fall of 2000, item validation (pilot) of the criterion referenced test in grades 2-8 is scheduled to take place. Tests will be built using selected items taken from existing CTB/McGraw Hill tests and augmented with additional items developed to bring the test into alignment with the Mississippi Curriculum.

- **Grades 4 & 7: Writing Assessments**

Students in these grades will be tested using two writing prompts covering: narrative, informative and/or persuasive forms.

- **Grades 3 - 8: The Terra Nova survey batteries in Reading and Mathematics**

These survey battery tests will fulfill the state requirements for norm-referenced testing. Schools served by *Title I* will also be required to administer the Terra Nova in at least one of *grades 10-12* to address the testing requirements outlined in the IASA of 1994.

2. Subject Area Testing Program (SATP)

- End of course testing will be given in:

1. Algebra I
2. Biology I
3. U. S. History from 1877, and
4. English II (multiple-choice and writing)

- All of these assessments will be in the item validation stage when given in April and May of 2000. The English II writing assessment will be given in March 2000.

3. The **Functional Literacy Exam (FLE)** is a criterion-referenced test used to assess students' ability to apply the skills necessary to perform basic:

- reading,
- mathematics, and
- written communication tasks.

The test is designed to determine which of these educational objectives have been mastered. The FLE is unique to Mississippi, and all students must meet a qualifying score of 70 percent correct in order to graduate from high school. The assessment is first administered in the fall of the junior year and retests are given in the spring following each fall administration. This assessment will be phased out as the SATP assessments become the criteria to determine whether or not students are eligible for high school graduation.

- *Norm or Criterion Referenced:*

Terra Nova:	norm-referenced
Grade Level Criterion Referenced Test:	criterion-referenced
Writing Assessment:	criterion referenced
Subject Area Tests:	criterion referenced
FLE:	criterion-referenced

- *Matrix or Census Testing: Census*
- *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.*

TerraNova: Multiple choice

Grade Level

Criterion Referenced

Test: Tests will be built using selected items taken from existing CTB/McGraw Hill tests and augmented with additional items developed to bring the test into alignment with the Mississippi Curriculum.

FLE: 70% selected response multiple choice and 30% constructed response

Writing assessments: two writing prompts for both grades and visual prompts for the fourth grade

SATP: English II – two writing prompts and 70 multiple choice items
 Algebra I – primarily multiple choice with a small percentage of open response
 U.S. History - primarily multiple choice with a small percentage of open response
 Biology - primarily multiple choice with a small percentage of open response

- *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)*

1. GLTP: Terra Nova grades 3-8 and the writing assessments for grades 4 and 7 will be given in May 2000

2. SATP: Item validation testing for English II - Writing will be given in March 2000
 Item Validation pilots for Algebra, U.S. History, Biology and English II multiple-choice will be given April 25-28 with make-up testing May 1, 2000

3. FLE: Administered in November 1999; make-up testing in March 2000

4. Grade Level
 Criterion Referenced

Test: Item Validation for this in grades 2-8 will take place in the fall of 2000

- *High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline)*

The **Functional Literacy Examination** (FLE) component of the Mississippi Assessment System is the minimum competency test required to receive a Mississippi **high school**

diploma. It is initially given in the 11th grade with repeat testing in the 11th and 12th grades for those not passing. The test includes multiple choice questions in reading, mathematics and written communications along with a direct writing prompt. In the 1997-1998 school year the primary administration of the FLE was changed from spring to fall. It is criterion referenced based on the Mississippi curriculum. The primary administration is given in the fall of the junior year and retests are given in the spring following each fall administration – pupils only retake those sections not passed.

- *Other Assessments*

The **Mississippi Career Planning and Assessment System (MS-CPAS)** is the vocational assessment. At least twenty-four secondary and twenty-four post-secondary occupation-specific tests have been developed, with more currently under development. In 1998-99 five secondary and five post-secondary performance assessment rubrics were developed, designed, and piloted through a joint effort by ACT, its subcontractors, and Mississippi vocational instructors, with more currently under development. The MS-CPAS is administered to all vocational completers at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

The MS-CPAS includes the following three parts:

1. an assessment of workplace readiness skills in reading, locating information, and math, composed of 30-40 selected response (multiple choice) items per area;
2. occupation-specific assessments based upon Mississippi curriculum frameworks for selected programs, composed of 70 selected response (multiple choice) items per program; and
3. performance assessments for selected occupation-specific programs, composed of performance ratings for selected competencies covered in the two-year program.

- *Transitional or Final Assessment System: Transitional*

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

As part of the initial process of developing the new statewide assessment system, all superintendents were asked to nominate teachers from their district to serve on the Test Development Teams. The assessment system encompasses the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP), the Grade Level Testing Program (GLTP), the Mississippi Career Planning and Assessment System (MS-CPAS), and the Functional Literacy Examination (FLE). Test Development Teams were put together for the SATP and the GLTP; as well, a separate writing team was formed for the writing assessments. Thirty members were selected for each of the four teams for the Subject Area Testing Program (SATP): Algebra I, Biology I, U. S. History from 1877, and English II. Teams of teachers were also chosen in the content areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, and Reading in grades 2-8 for the Grade Level Testing Program (GLTP). A writing team, comprised of teachers representing grades 2-10, coordinated the writing assessments in grades 4, 7, and 10 (English II).

In the first step of the process, the teams reviewed the curriculum frameworks and identified content to be assessed. Currently, data is being garnered and analyzed from surveys received from teachers in specific grades who teach specific content areas. As the teams continue to meet, material will be summarized and disseminated to every school in the form of questionnaires for reaction and feedback. The teams will continue to meet throughout the fall to complete the development of the tests.

In developing the grade level criterion referenced assessments teacher committees were presented a number of previously developed CTB assessments. It was hoped that one test could be chosen from which a subset of items aligned with the criterion referenced test blueprint would be included in this test to provide vertical equating statistics. These items would then be supplemented by a large group of augmenting and experimental items to form the initial "item validation" administration of this test. After review of these tests, however, it was decided that none of the initial set of CTB tests provided sufficient alignment with the Mississippi curriculum when used alone. An additional CTB test (currently being normed nationwide) chosen to be more in line with the Mississippi curriculum was therefore added to the list and the option of adding selected items from multiple CTB tests was opened. The teacher committees will continue to work with the contractor and the Mississippi Department of Education to develop the specific list of items to be included in the item validation administration of this assessment in the fall of 2000.

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?*

Local districts are only required to administer the state assessments as instructed by the State Department of Education.

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? Probe on:*
- *Refining standards*
 - *Revamping assessments*
 - *Adding components to assessments*
- What is the timeline for completion of the alignment?*

The state has begun a process of developing and validating state assessments that will provide enhanced alignment with recently modified state content standards as required by Goals 2000 and IASA. The state has not yet decided how the IASA requirement for a mathematics assessment in the 10-12 grade span will be satisfied, since the high school Algebra 1 test will normally be given in the 9th grade.

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

The state's approach for ensuring alignment has been to require the Test Development Teams to review the curriculum frameworks as the first stage of assessment development. The use of teacher surveys and questionnaires to gather reaction and feedback has also helped to identify

those areas of the curriculum that should be covered by the state assessments. The process of field testing and item validation will further help to inform the teams as to how well the assessments and the standards are aligned. Each of the subject area tests (SATP) also has blueprints, which specify how the questions are aligned with the state standards.

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

FLE Data

- Assists in the identification of educational needs at the district and school levels to ensure that all pupils possess minimum competencies in reading, mathematics, and written communication
- Identifies individual educational needs of pupils
- Verifies compliance with requirement for the standard high school diploma
- Required as an accountability measure for the district performance-based accreditation system

Use of Subject Area Assessment Data

- Program data reported in format to be used for promoting classroom instruction focusing on problem-centered strategies in addition to acquisition of content and improvement of professional development offerings to local school districts
- Data used as performance indicator for the accreditation model
- Information to be examined as possible performance indicator for new expanded accreditation model

Use of MS-CPAS Data

- Used as part of the requirements for meeting Perkins III "indicators of performance" standards for attainment of occupational skills,
- Used for program improvement and instructional support, and
- Used within the Tech Prep initiative to assist in evaluating the integration of academic and vocational skills

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)?*

K-2 Informal, developmentally-appropriate diagnostic assessments:

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) through the Office of Student Assessment (OSA) and the Office of Instructional Development (OID) is soliciting competitive written proposals for inclusion on the approved vendor list of the Kindergarten – 2 Observational and Informal Diagnostic Reading and Mathematics Assessments (K-2 Assessments).

The first regular administration of the **criterion-referenced test** is scheduled for the spring of 2001. Performance standards will be developed after the test has been administered.

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

The state came to realize that the assessments in place were not aligned to the state standards, so they are now in the process of developing and field testing assessments that will be aligned with the state standards and fulfill the requirements under the IASA. Specifically, the state has not yet determined how they will test high school students in math so that the grade 10-12 assessment requirement will be addressed; the Algebra I end-of-course assessment is generally administered in the 8th grade.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

Mississippi Code 37-16-3 requires that every pupil enrolled in a public school participate in the Mississippi Assessment System and that the school district superintendent certify annually that all eligible pupils enrolled in the designated grade were tested. However, some exemptions from participation in the testing programs are allowed and certain accommodations may be provided in accordance with Mississippi Code 37-16-9.

Any parent who elects for his/her child to participate or any student who elects to participate in an assessment program will be allowed to do so. Any student who exits high school with a regular high school diploma must pass the test of functional literacy as required by MS Code 37-16-7.

- 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?*

Students with a disability as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Act: The IEP Committee must determine, and record in the Individual Educational Plan (IEP), whether a student with a disability will participate in each applicable component of the Mississippi Assessment System. The general guideline for determining student participation is whether the goals of the student's instruction are consistent with the standards with which the regular assessment is aligned. The category of a student's disability, the setting of instruction, or the expectation of not performing well on a particular test should not be the basis of exempting a student from participation.

A student with a disability, who is learning the same content or working toward the same goals as other students in the regular education classroom, even though instruction may be provided in a different setting, should participate in the regular education assessment program. At the elementary level, exemptions from participation may occur when students are not working toward the same goals as other students in the regular education general curriculum, such as those students with severe disabilities. For students at the secondary level, exemptions may occur when the IEP indicates implementation of a different set of standards than those of the regular assessment program due to educational goals being focused on the pursuit of life skills, vocational/job skills training and/or a GED.

Students with a disability under Section 504 with a current 504 Accommodation Plan: Students with a disability under Section 504 must participate in all applicable aspects of the Mississippi Assessment System.

Students with a temporary physical disability resulting from an illness or injury: Students with a temporary physical disability resulting from an illness or injury, such as a broken limb or temporary vision loss may be provided an exemption from participation in a testing program. Decisions for an exemption will be based on the professional judgment of the school principal and the district test coordinator following confirmation with the student's teacher(s) and must be approved by the Office of Student Assessment.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Students: LEP students are expected to participate in all aspects of the Mississippi Assessment System. LEP students may be exempted from components of the Mississippi Assessment System except for the test of functional literacy, based on the professional judgment of the school principal and the district's test coordinator following confirmation with the student's teacher(s). An exemption from participation should occur for no more than two consecutive years and must be based on a language assessment designed for LEP students. The results of the language assessment must be documented and maintained on file in the district. A LEP student is defined as one:

- who was not born in the United States or whose language is other than English; or
 - who comes from a home in which a language other than English is used most for communication; or
 - who is an American Indian or Alaska Native and comes from a home in which a language other than English has had significant impact on his or her level of English language proficiency as a result of substantial use of that other language for communication; and
 - who, as a result of the circumstances described in paragraph 1 of the definition, has sufficient difficulty in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny him or her the opportunity to:
 1. learn successfully in classrooms in which the language of instruction is English; or
 2. participate fully in our society.
2. *What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?*

Mississippi Code 37-16-9 ensures that appropriate test modifications/accommodations are provided for eligible students. Accommodations may include modification of the testing instruments and procedures to ensure that the test results represent the student's achievement rather than sensory, manual, speaking, or psychological process skills, except when such skills are the factors the test purports to measure.

Test accommodations are considered changes in testing procedures that provide students with disabilities under IDEA or under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, students with a temporary physical disability, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students an equal opportunity to participate in test situations and to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

Accommodations can change the method that test items are presented to a student and the method of the student's response to test items.

Students Eligible for Accommodations

Students who qualify for accommodations include:

- Students who have a current eligibility certification by a Screening Team for a specific disability under IDEA, have a current IEP and receive special education services;
- Students with a disability under Section 504 with a current 504 Accommodation Plan;
- Students with a temporary physical disability; and
- LEP students.

Determining the Need for Accommodations

The circumstances in which students may be eligible for test accommodations are outlined below and are based on the specific needs of each student. While any student may participate in applicable components of the testing program, there are limits regarding the accommodations that may be made for a student if the test results are to be considered a valid measure of the student's achievement and knowledge. Accommodations that meet the following criteria are considered appropriate for measuring a student's achievement and knowledge:

- The accommodations must not affect the validity of the test;
- The accommodations must function only to allow the test to measure what it purports to measure; and
- The accommodation must be narrowly tailored to address a specific need in order to justify the request.

Based on the criteria established above, some accommodations for tests in the Mississippi Assessment System are beyond the standardization procedures and affect the validity of the test results. Use of accommodations that do not meet the established criteria will not allow the test to measure what it purports to measure; therefore, the test results are not an accurate measure of the student's achievement and knowledge.

To determine the need for accommodations, the following guidelines must be followed:

Students with a disability as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Act:

Accommodations needed for the student to participate must be listed on the student's current IEP as a modification or accommodation under the Supplementary Aids and Services in Regular Education section or as a modification or accommodation utilized in the provision of special education services. If an assistive technology device or interpreter is needed, such services must be addressed on the student's IEP to support the need for such an accommodation.

The student's teacher and the Supervisor of Special Education must determine any accommodations needed by a student to participate in each applicable component of the Mississippi Assessment System. Such accommodations must be listed on the student's current IEP and provided as stated in the IEP.

Students with a disability under Section 504 with a current 504 Accommodation Plan:

The 504 Accommodation Team must determine the need for an accommodation(s) and the

specific accommodations necessary for a student to participate in an applicable assessment program. An accommodation(s) needed by a student with a disability under Section 504 must be documented in a current 504 Accommodation Plan and provided as stated in the Plan.

Students with a temporary physical disability resulting from an illness or injury:

Accommodations for a student with a temporary physical disability may be provided after receiving approval from the Office of Student Assessment. Requests for accommodations will be based on the professional judgment of the school principal and the District Test Coordinator. The need for accommodations and the specific accommodations must be documented and maintained on file in the district.

Limited English Proficiency Students: Any accommodation needed by an LEP student and the specific accommodation(s) necessary for a student to participate in an applicable assessment program must be determined by the school principal and the district's test coordinator following confirmation with the student's teacher(s).

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

No such assessments exist at this time.

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?*

Although planning for the alternative assessments is underway for those students with the most severe/profound mental retardation (an estimated 2 percent of the entire student population), no such assessment is in place for the 1999-2000 school year.

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?*

The state is working toward the inclusion of 98 percent of the state's students (those not included in the 2 percent specified previously with the most severe mental retardation). The state strategy includes the development of additional accommodations and modifications for the 2000-2001 school year.

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)?*

As stated, additional accommodations and modifications, along with a new inclusion policy are being developed for the fall of 2000. These new policies will be implemented along with the formal administration of the new assessments once item validation has taken place. Extensive listings of accommodations are being developed for each of assessment components: the SATP,

the criterion and norm-referenced assessments and the writing assessments, and will include specific accommodations under the following categories:

- setting conditions,
- timing/scheduling conditions,
- presentation conditions and
- response conditions.

Complete documentation, however, was not available outlining these inclusion policies.

Performance Standards

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

The qualifying score on the **Functional Literacy Exam** is set at a composite scaled score of 699 for the three tests or an average of 70 percent correct on each test. Pupils may score as low as a scaled score of 211 (60 percent correct) on any test, but make this up by scoring higher than a scaled score of 233 (70 percent correct) on the other test(s). Any pupil scoring below a scaled score of 211 (60 percent correct) on any test will fail that test, regardless of his/her total score. Pupils will, however, be allowed to "bank" scaled scores of 233 (70 percent) or above for individual test areas. This means once a pupil passes one or more tests of the FLE, he/she will have to retake only those tests not passed.

The first regular administrations of the grade level criterion referenced tests and the subject area tests are scheduled for the spring of 2001. Performance standards will be developed after these tests have been administered.

2. *Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures (e.g. 70% of students in Maryland pass the MSPAP)?*

Although the accreditation system described below will no longer be used and is "frozen" for the 1999-2000 school year, until this point each school district was assigned to one accreditation level each year (levels 1-5, with 5 as excellent). These levels will be maintained for at least the 1999-2000 school year, if not longer.

Within each level there have been **annual performance indexes** used to show differences in performance among the districts assigned to the same level, and a district's performance could vary from year to year even if it continued to be assigned to the same accreditation level. These performance indexes also allowed for performance comparisons within accreditation levels and to assess improvement in performance ratings. The school districts in the state were categorized into these accreditation levels and performance indexes as follows (for a complete explanation, see the accountability section; for the performance indexes see Table 3 in the Appendix):

- Level 5: excellent
- Level 4: advanced
- Level 3: successful
- Level 2: warned
- Level 1: probation

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)?*

The performance standards for public school districts have been implemented in two phases. Phase 1 applies 37 Level 3 performance standards to each public school district. The percentage of Level 3 performance standards met by a district resulted in the assignment of a performance Level of 1, 2, or 3. Districts that meet the criteria for performance Level 3 then entered Phase 2 of the system, and 38 Level 5 performance standards were applied to those districts. Based upon the percentage of Level 5 performance standards met, a district would either remain at Level 3 or be assigned Level 4 or 5.

Annual Minimum Values

Annual minimum scaled score values were established for the reading, writing, and mathematics subtests of the:

- Functional Literacy Examination (FLE),
- the Performance Assessments (open-ended response items) for the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP), and
- the Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology I subject area tests.

Annual minimum normal curve equivalent (NCE) score values were established for the reading, language, and mathematics subtests of the ITBS/TAP Survey Battery.

Phase 1 (see Table I in the Appendix):

The Level 3 annual minimum values for the included assessments were set to fall within a narrow range bound by an absolute minimum value and a maximum criterion value. To determine the annual minimum values, the student level standard deviation for the state was calculated for each test variable. One-half standard deviation was then subtracted from the state mean for the FLE subtests, the ITBS/TAP Survey Battery subtests, and the Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology I subject area tests, and one standard deviation was subtracted from the state mean for the ITBS/TAP Performance Assessments.

- 1) If the calculated value fell within the allowable band, the Level 3 annual minimum value for that test was set at that point (one or one-half standard deviation below the state mean).
- 2) If the calculated value fell below the absolute minimum value, the absolute minimum value was used as the annual minimum value for that test.
- 3) If the calculated value fell above the maximum value, the maximum value was used as the annual minimum value for that test.

The Level 3 annual minimum value for the “percentage of students in the lower quarter” (Q1) variable was set at 30%. To meet the Level 3 Q1 performance standard, the percentage of students with scores below Q1 (the 25th percentile) must be 30% or less on seven of the ten tests (the ITBS/TAP Survey Battery Total for grades 4-9, the FLE Composite, and the Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology I subject area tests). Once the annual minimum values had been set, the percentage of the Level 3 performance standards met by each district was calculated. Based upon

the percentage of the performance standards met, districts were assigned a performance level of 1, 2, or 3. Districts that meet Level 3 performance requirements then enter Phase 2 of the accreditation system.

Phase 2 (see Table 2 in the Appendix):

The Level 5 annual minimum values for the FLE subtests, the ITBS/TAP Survey Battery subtests, the Performance Assessments for the ITBS/TAP, the Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology I subject area tests were set at the mean of the districts that meet Level 3 performance requirements as described in Phase 1. The Level 5 annual minimum value for the “percentage of students in the lower quarter” (Q1) variable was set at 25%. To meet the Level 5 Q1 performance standard, the percentage of students with scores below Q1 (the 25th percentile) were required to be 25% or less on seven of ten tests (the ITBS/TAP Survey Battery Total for grades 4-9, the FLE Composite, and the Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology I subject area tests). The Level 5 annual minimum value for district graduation rate was set at 75%. Once the Level 5 annual minimum values had been set, the percentage of the Level 5 performance standards met by each district was calculated. Based upon the percentage of Level 5 performance standards met, districts were assigned a performance level of 3, 4, or 5.

The Annual Performance Index (see Table 3 in the Appendix):

The annual performance index allowed a district to track its performance rating from year to year. There have been differences in performance among the districts assigned to the same level, and a district’s performance may be different from year to year even if it continues to be assigned to the same accreditation level. To allow comparisons within performance levels and to assess improvement in performance ratings, the performance-based accreditation system includes an annual performance index for all districts.

- 1) The performance index for Levels 1, 2, and 3 was based upon the percentage of Level 3 performance standards met, and the performance index for Levels 3, 4, and 5 was based upon the percentage of Level 5 performance standards met.
- 2) The performance index ranged from 1.0 to 5.0 and represented a district’s position within a performance level. The index increased as the percentage of performance standards met increased.

Although a district in violation of an accreditation process standard would officially be assigned an accreditation Level 1 (Probation), the annual performance index will still indicate the percentage of either Level 3 or Level 5 performance standards met by the district.

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

All students have not been included in performance calculations. See **exclusion of test scores** below for a complete description.

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)?*

As the new assessment system continues to be developed, new performance standards for schools and students will be developed.

Three of the **Subject Area Testing Program** assessments (Algebra I, Biology, and U. S. History from 1877) have had a general rubric for the open-ended questions developed. Student responses to these questions will receive a score of 0 through 4, with four as the highest score. The informative scoring rubric for SATP English II utilizes scores 4-1, 4 as the highest, with descriptions for each level. Although the majority of the items on these assessments will be multiple choice, the standards for these questions have not yet been set. It is presumed, however, that the rubrics will also include scores from 0 to 4 with a similar structure to those above. Students will also be listed as having passed or failed the assessments once incorporated into the accountability system as a requirement for graduation. Student performance levels will be developed after the assessments have been fully implemented.

Similarly, the student performance levels have not yet been established for the criterion referenced test the test itself has not been fully developed; the “cut-scores” for the writing assessments at the fourth and seventh grade levels are also undetermined. The results of the **Terra Nova** norm-referenced test used for the 1999-2000 school will be reported in the format provided by the testing organization, and performance levels will not be developed in connection with the state until a later date.

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

In 1998-99, twelve districts were accredited as Level 1 districts. Two districts have been in conservatorship with the state and had their accreditation withdrawn.

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, School reports, District reports, State reports, Title I reports.*

The Office of Accountability Reporting collected and reported **school, district and state level data** on performance standards and other variables in the following format until the 1998-99 school year. The format and data that will reported for the 1999-2000 **Mississippi Report Card** is unknown at this time. The annual publication of the Mississippi Report Card and the **Superintendent’s Annual Report to the Legislature** have been the two primary vehicles to provide information to the public.

Categories of Information included in the Mississippi Report Card for 1998-99 (definitions of the categories have been included as needed):

- District Accreditation Level
- Performance Levels from 1995-96 to 1997-98
- Demographic Information: 1990 Census (White, Black, Asian, native American, Hispanic)
- 1995-96 Enrollment
- % of Students in Lowest Quarter (%<Q1)

The 25th percentile is also called Quartile 1 or Q1, and the percentage of students in the lowest quarter refers to the percentage of students in the school district whose score on the test fell in the first or lowest quarter of the total score distribution. The lowest quarter of the distribution is comprised of scores from the first percentile through the 24th percentile. Students who scored at the 25th percentile or above are not in the lowest quarter of the distribution.

- Attendance as % of Enrollment: attendance as a percentage of enrollment is calculated by dividing the first month's average daily attendance by the end of the first month's enrollment.
- % Eligible for Free Lunch
- Number of Carnegie Units Taught

The number of Carnegie Units taught is taken directly from the Personnel Reports that are submitted by the districts to the Mississippi Department of Education. Carnegie Units are the actual units taught. If more than one teacher teaches the course, the course will be counted only once. The Carnegie Unit is an unduplicated count of units taught including, Vocational Education units.

- Classroom Pupil/Teacher Ratio
- Number of Dropouts
- % Teachers with Advanced Degrees
- % Emergency Certificates

The percentage of emergency certificates refers to the number of emergency certificates relative to the total number of teachers. These numbers are taken from the Personnel Report each school district submits to the Mississippi Department of Education and includes school personnel with an instructional code "EC" (emergency certificate) in their type of certificate. This count only includes emergency certificates issued for the school year in question (95-96).

- Number of Gifted Teachers
- % Gifted Students (Grades 2-12)
- % Special Education Students
- % Receiving Diplomas
- Federal Special Education Budget

This information is obtained from the Special Education Maintenance of Effort report, which is derived from finance reports submitted by each school district to the Mississippi Department of Education.

- State/Local Special Education Budget

This information is obtained from the Special Education Maintenance of Effort report, which is derived from finance reports submitted by each school district to the Mississippi Department of Education.

- Number of Vocational Teachers
- % Students in Vocational Programs (Grades 7-8)
- % Students in Vocational Programs (Grades 9-12)

- Total Per Pupil Expenditure
- % State and Local Revenues
- % Federal Revenues
- % District Administration Expenditures
- Valuation Per Student in ADA

The valuation per student in ADA is calculated by subtracting the special Homestead valuation (over 65 years of age or disabled) from the total assessed valuation and dividing the total by the Average Daily Attendance

- Title I Budget
- % Used for Classroom Instruction
- Number of Eligible Children and % of Eligible Children Served
- Number of Title I Schools
- Number of AP Courses Offered
- AP Students as % of High School Enrollment
- Graduation Rate
- Mean ACT Core Composite Score
- IHL (% ACT Core)

School level test data has been presented along with the district, state, and national means. The percentage of students in the lowest quarter refers to the percentage of students who score below the 25th percentile. Percentile ranks of one through 24 place students in the lowest quarter.

Districts were also **ranked** on each of the categories listed above. The rankings indicated (1) size, such as enrollment, or (2) performance level, such as test scores. The ranking was one to 153, with one representing either the largest in relation to size or the highest ranking in relation to performance. If several districts had the same data, all the districts would receive the same ranking and the next district in order would receive a ranking corresponding to the number of districts ahead of it. If several districts tied for last place, the last ranking would not be 153.

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)?*

The Mississippi Report Cards have been distributed from the state to each district, and made available to the media. The SDE web site also provided access to the report cards and school testing data. Public requests for data were addressed on an individual basis.

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)?*

Although the state has disaggregated student performance data by the categories required by the federal government: gender, race, limited English proficiency status, migrant Status, students with disabilities, and socio-economic status, these figures have not been included in the Mississippi Report Cards until 1998-99 when statistics were reported for students with disabilities. However, disaggregated data was mailed to districts for each school in the district.

4. *Does trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from “1996-97 on”)?*

Although trend data is available from 1994-1998, that data will no longer apply to the new system of assessments presently being implemented.

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 performance of student with disabilities was reported for the first time on the 1998-99 report cards. This was the case in districts where at least 10 students participated in the ITBS, TAP and FLE. The performance of limited English proficiency students has not been reported.

Exclusion of Test Scores

When accommodations exceed those allowed for a specific test, the results are not considered to be a valid measure of the student’s achievement and knowledge; therefore, the results have not been included in a district’s summary statistics utilized in the performance-based accreditation system. Such scores have not been used to report the performance of students with disabilities to the public since the results of such tests are not statistically sound.

Students with a disability under IDEA and Section 504, students with a temporary disability, and LEP students have had their scores excluded in the following situations:

Students with a disability as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Act: Scores have been excluded when students are provided instruction utilizing an alternate or parallel curriculum in any of the areas assessed. This type of curriculum is different from the basic expectations of any other regular education student in that subject area, and the grade given is not based on the basic regular education curriculum objectives. Also, when students’ IEPs indicate they are working toward eventually meeting the same basic curriculum objectives but, due to their educational delays, are not expected to meet the basic curriculum objectives for that school year, their scores will be excluded. This does not include a modified curriculum of regular education subject areas since students utilizing such a curriculum are expected to master the basic objectives of the regular education subject and receive their grades from regular education; and/or

The appropriate accommodations for the assessment are insufficient or inappropriate to meet the student’s needs. This determination is made by comparing the accommodations and modifications specified and provided in accordance with a student’s current IEP to the appropriate accommodations for the assessment. Guidelines regarding specific allowable

accommodations for each test are on file in the Office of Student Assessment and in the Office of Special Education.

Students with a disability under Section 504 with a current 504 Accommodation Plan: In rare and unusual circumstances, a student's scores have been excluded if the appropriate accommodations for this assessment are insufficient or inappropriate to meet the student's needs. This determination is made by comparing the accommodations and modifications specified and provided in accordance with a student's current 504 Accommodation Plan to the appropriate accommodations for the assessment.

Students with a temporary physical disability: A student's scores have been excluded if the appropriate accommodations for this assessment are insufficient or inappropriate to meet the student's needs due to the disability. This determination is made by comparing the accommodations and modifications provided by a teacher(s) on a consistent basis to the appropriate accommodations for the assessment.

LEP students: Scores have been excluded for LEP students if the student has met the requirements to be exempted but elects to participate in the assessment or if the appropriate accommodations for this assessment are insufficient or inappropriate to meet a student's needs. This determination is made by comparing the accommodations and modifications provided by a teacher(s) on a consistent basis to the appropriate accommodations for the assessment.

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

Districts at levels 1 and 2 has been required to create a Corrective Action Plan to address the district's deficiencies as reported through the use of assessment data.

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 format and indicators to be included in the report cards for the 1999-2000 school year are unknown at this time. The accreditation levels will remain as they are for 1999-2000 and schools and districts will be held harmless until the new assessment and accreditation systems are fully in place.

Under the plan under consideration by the legislature, the Mississippi Department of Education would be required to make a semi-annual report to the Mississippi Board of Education identifying the number and names of the schools identified as Schools at Risk. This report would include a brief summary of the problems identified and the actions taken/suggested for each school identified. The Department would also notify the Board of the schools that successfully complete their improvement plans and are no longer Schools at Risk.

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

Specifying and reporting on all of the subgroups to be disaggregated under federal law has been an issue in the state. It has not yet been determined as to which racial/ethnic groups should be included in the disaggregation of data.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

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

During the 1999-2000 school year, as a result of **Senate Bill 2156**, the Mississippi legislature reviewed a proposal approved by the Mississippi Board of Education on November 19, 1999. The measure was passed by the state legislature during the 2000 session with amendments included in **Senate Bill 2488**. Under the new system, the state will be moving from a district level accreditation system to a school accreditation model with growth expectations and continued high stakes for student graduation. Students will be required to pass four end of course exams (Algebra 1, Biology 1, English II with a writing component, and U.S. History from 1877) which will replace the FLE over a multi-year phase-in process. There will be rewards for high achieving schools and sanctions for schools at risk. However, schools and districts will be held harmless for the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years.

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

- *Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

Students have been and will continue to be held accountable for achievement on the Functional Literacy Exam (FLE), a criterion-referenced assessment based on core objectives from the high school curriculum structure. Any pupil scoring below a scaled score of 211 (60 percent correct) on any test will fail that test, regardless of his/her total score. Pupils will, however, be allowed to "bank" scaled scores of 233 (70 percent) or above for individual test areas. This means once a pupil passes one or more tests of the FLE, he/she will have to retake only those tests not passed. This assessment will continue to be used for all students now at or above the 7th grade level and/or until the SATP tests finish the process of item validation and are implemented fully. Students will not be required to pass end-of-course and exit tests until the tests are determined to be legally valid – a process that is expected to take several years.

However, if a student has finished all other requirements for graduation but has not passed the FLE, that student remains eligible to retake the test for three consecutive annual cycles from the time of disenrollment. Note that these are minimum requirements only; if the district chooses to do so, it can offer the test beyond this time frame.

- *School Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

Although the system of district accountability that has been in place only held schools accountable through their affiliation within their district's accreditation level, the new system

will shift the accreditation system to the school level and hold schools and their staffs accountable for performance on the state assessments.

The impetus of the new student accountability system was the **Mississippi Student Achievement Improvement Act**, signed by Governor Kirk Fordice as Senate Bill 2156 in March of 1999. New accreditation levels are set after the new system is fully implemented. The new system will still center around a similar multi-level accreditation system, although the emphasis will be placed at the school level.

- *District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

The state system of accreditation has, until 1999-2000, ranked districts on a scale of 1 to 5 based on both achievement standards – most of which were measured by norm-referenced tests, and process standards to measure school services.

Accreditation levels have ranged from one to five, with five being the highest level possible:

- Level 5: districts are considered excellent
- Level 4: districts are deemed advanced
- Level 3: districts are successful
- Level 2: districts are considered warned
- Level 1: districts are on probation and are required to write and implement corrective action plans outlining how deficiencies will be addressed.

Two different ratings are assigned to districts – a **performance index** and an **accreditation level**. The performance index took only test scores into consideration, while the accreditation level considered both performance standards and process standards. Process standards were used to help ensure that districts provided basic resources commonly believed to be necessary in the operation of a school. Certified teachers and administrators, along with up-to-standard school buses are examples of process standards. The accreditation levels were assigned to districts in March of each year by the State Accreditation Commission.

The accreditation levels indicated the following:

- Accredited-5 level indicated that the district has met 100% of Level 5 performance standards and all applicable process standards;
- Accredited-4, 85% to 99% of the Level 5 performance standards and all applicable process standards;
- Accredited-3, 90% to 100% of the Level 3 performance standards and all applicable process standards;
- Accredited-2, 70% to 89% of the Level 3 performance standards and all process standards; Accredited-1, less than 70% of the performance standards and less than 100% of the process standards.

In addition, there are two districts that continue to have their accreditation withdrawn, resulting in a designation of **Accreditation-Withdrawn** for each of those districts. With the advent of the new system of school accreditation, the state has yet to decide how these two districts will be categorized. Officials are hoping that both districts will achieve acceptable process standards and then start with a “clean slate” in the area of student performance under the new system.

Rewards

Thirteen Mississippi school districts were selected as **Most Improved in Student Performance** for the 1998-99 school year. District test scores – including results from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, the Functional Literacy Exam and Algebra I and U. S. History end-of-course tests – were used to select the districts. This was the second year districts who have demonstrated marked improvement in student performance have been publicly recognized by the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education. Those districts in **Level 5 accreditation** have also been recognized by the state.

Sanctions

When a school district has been assigned a Level 1 or 2 accreditation status, the Mississippi Department of Education, in conjunction with the school district, was required to develop a corrective action plan to correct the district's deficiencies. The State Board of Education implemented the program of development in each probationary district. If the recommendations for corrective action were not taken or if the deficiencies were not removed by the end of the two-year probationary period, the school district was subject to having its accredited status withdrawn by the Commission on School Accreditation, the Commission issues a request to the Governor that a state of emergency be declared in the district and the district was placed in state **Conservatorship**. If the accreditation of the school district was withdrawn, the status of the district was be listed as Accreditation-Withdrawn.

After a district's accreditation was withdrawn, the Commission of Accreditation would file a public notice at least once a week for at least three consecutive weeks in a newspaper published within the immediate or general vicinity of the affected school district.

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*

Under the district accreditation system, an absolute target was set for districts. Under the new school accreditation system, schools would be able to show both growth and achievement of an absolute target.

4. *Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?*

All students have not been included in calculations (see **Exclusion of Test Scores** above).

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?*

Title I schools and districts have been operating under the same system of accountability and the proposed system under review in the legislature also outlines an aligned system.

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?*

No, subgroup performance is not used as a specific indicator.

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

The non-public schools in the state have operated under a separate system of accreditation which has measured only process standards and not school performance. However, any nonpublic school may request that the State Board of Education approve the school based on a process promulgated by the State Board of Education, provided, however, that in no event shall the State Board of Education adopt more stringent standards for approval of nonpublic schools than the accreditation standards applied to public schools.

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?*

For 1999-2000, the accountability system is in a “hold harmless” state, although districts have and will maintain their accreditation levels and performance indicators as reported last year. However, according to the *Report to the Mississippi Legislature on a Plan to Identify and Reward Improving and High-Performing Schools and an Accountability Plan to ensure Student Achievement (approved by the Mississippi State Board of Education: November 19, 1999)* and the amendments included in *Senate Bill 2488*, each school would be assigned a growth expectation by the Mississippi Department of Education as follows:

- A growth expectation will be established by testing students annually and, using a psychometrically approved formula by tracking their progress. This growth expectation will result in a composite score each year for each school.
- In addition, a determination will be made as to the percentage of students proficient in each school. This measurement will define what a student must know in order to be deemed proficient at each grade level and will clearly show how well a student is performing. The definition of proficiency will be developed for each grade, based on input from Mississippi teachers and their review of the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks.

Based on this criterion, a school could be classified solely by its performance level. The terms to define levels of classification will be developed by the Mississippi Board of Education.

Rewards

Under the amendments listed in Section 1 of Senate Bill 2488, the SBE will identify and reward Superior-Performing or Exemplary Schools based on students:

(1) exceeding an annual growth expectation, or

(2) achieving a percentage of grade level proficiency.

The state will provide school incentives for Superior-Performing and Exemplary Schools and special recognition for schools so designated.

The Board plans to give special recognition to schools and school districts that achieve the high levels of growth and/or performance. Additionally, the State Board of Education will recognize a school that meets but does not exceed its goal with a special certificate.

Sanctions

Under Sections 2 and 3 of Senate Bill 2488, no later than July 2002, a program of development will be established for schools not meeting accreditation standards. Schools not meeting established growth expectations or grade level proficiency standards will be labeled **Priority Schools**. Within fifteen (15) days of designation, these schools will be properly notified by the SBE. No more than fifteen (15) days after notification, they will be assigned a *trained evaluation team* appointed by the State Superintendent. The evaluation team will conduct an on-site audit, prepare a report, and submit the report to the State Superintendent within forty-five (45) days for approval. The evaluation report will identify personnel in need of professional development.

Evaluation instruments will be field tested by the SDE for one (1) year prior to use. The evaluation report will be submitted to school officials and also be presented to the community at a publicized meeting.

Within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the evaluation report, the Priority School must prepare and approve an improvement plan in conjunction with the SDE, school officials, the evaluation team and parents. The SDE will then provide technical assistance and report monthly to the local board and community.

Principals, teachers and district superintendents would also be held accountable for student performance under the new plan if deemed to be in need of improvement by the state. Those so categorized would be required to participate in a professional development plan. Teachers, superintendents and principals might also be assigned a mentor who has demonstrated expertise through which the staff member would receive support and technical assistance and be able to observe and work with high-performing staff as appropriate.

Principals and teachers will be periodically evaluated and given two (2) years to improve. If after two (2) years the school continues to be a Priority School, the principal will be dismissed. If after two (2) years the teacher has not improved, the teacher will also be dismissed.

If a central office deficiency exists in a school district having a Priority School, the superintendent will participate in professional development and be periodically evaluated by the school board. If after three (3) years the school continues to be a Priority School, the SBE may ask the Governor to declare the office of that superintendent be subject to recall. The SBE may make such a request **if more than 50% of the schools in the district are designated Priority Schools in any one year**. Upon declaration by the Governor, if elected, the superintendent will stand for reelection. If appointed, the superintendent will then stand for reappointment

If after four (4) years, local school board members in the same school circumstances described above for the superintendent will also be subject to recall by a declaration of the Governor. The SBE may also seek emergency declaration by the Governor to initiate the **conservatorship provisions**.

The SBE will submit a comprehensive annual report to the school district and legislature on the progress of any district assigned an interim conservator. If after three (3) years a school under conservatorship does not show substantial instruction improvement or remains a Priority School, the SBE shall submit to the legislature a plan that includes:

- (1) removal of the conservator, and
- (2) restructuring of the improvement plan through the community and local school administration.

****This legislation (Senate Bill 2488)** took effect as of July 1, 2000, but the state will not have data to implement the performance/growth model until summer 2002, after the second “live” administration of the new criterion-referenced assessment. That will be the earliest that the state will be able to provide any of the analyses required to identify priority schools. It will not be possible to assign school level accountability ratings in 2000-2001.

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

The state is now in the process of shifting from district to school accountability, and so issues have yet to be explored in the legislative process. For 1999-2000, the SDE is working on how to prepare the two districts in conservatorship for the new system and how to communicate with districts about their status as the new state system develops.

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?

Under the district accreditation model, districts identified as level 1 or 2 in the accreditation process were low performing.

Under the new system of school accountability, the State Board of Education and the Mississippi Department of Education will identify schools not meeting established growth expectations or grade level proficiency standards as **Priority Schools**. No later than July 2002, a program of development will be established for schools not meeting accreditation standards.

The new model implements a multi-step process to enact overall school performance to:

- identify poorly performing schools;
- analyze the areas of deficiency and the areas in which improvement is needed;
- educate and build local support for necessary reforms and improvements;
- provide quality assistance and support to the school;
- assess student improvement following initiation of the school improvement plan;

- eliminate poorly performing educators from the educational process; and,
- sustain improved student performance.

A school that meets its goal each year would not be subject to a school evaluation or school improvement plan as detailed under the accountability plan described herein.

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?*

The district accreditation system only identified schools through their association with a low-performing district. The new system will identify schools at risk. In both cases, however, the state has been and will be responsible for the decision.

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

Under the district accreditation system, on-site evaluations were scheduled to provide technical assistance to Level 1 and Level 2 districts. The on-site evaluation was conducted under the supervision of an auditor employed by the Mississippi Department of Education. The evaluation team used various methods to identify deficient areas in educational programs and in meeting accreditation standards. The primary methods used to collect evaluation data are examination of official records, interviews with school personnel, and observations. Upon completion of the evaluation, a report of findings is compiled and submitted to the chairman of the board and the superintendent and is used as the basis for providing technical assistance. If deficiencies are found in meeting accreditation standards, the superintendent is notified in writing and given thirty days from the receipt of notification to provide a written response. The report has been filed in the current accreditation records in the Office of Accreditation.

4. *Who provides the state assistance?*

As outlined above, evaluation teams assigned by the state would work with low performing districts and schools as part of the accreditation model.

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 has not and would not differ for Title I or non-Title I schools.

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?*

Districts had been able to move from level 1 or 2 to a higher level by improving test scores and implementing the corrective action plan as required by the state.

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?*

When a school district has been assigned a Level 1 or 2 accreditation status, the Mississippi Department of Education, in conjunction with the school district, was required to develop a **corrective action plan** to correct the district's deficiencies.

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?*

Under the new school-level accreditation plan by the State Legislature, the Mississippi Department of Education will begin identifying and training a pool of individuals across the state to serve on **Evaluation Teams**. Included in this identification would be high-performing teachers and those certified by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The Mississippi Department of Education would train the pool members in the analysis and evaluation of schools, districts, and personnel. These individuals would then be eligible to participate as an Evaluation Team member.

Evaluation Team

Once a Priority School has been identified and written notice sent via certified mail to both the school and the school district, the State Board of Education and the Mississippi Department of Education will assign an Evaluation Team to the targeted school. Prior to assigning this team, the Mississippi Department of Education will involve the state level associations for their assistance in selecting the Evaluation Team and in coordinating the team's efforts. The team members shall be independent of the school being evaluated and shall not be employees of the Mississippi Department of Education. The team may include retired educators who have met certain standards, have good reputations and have completed all necessary training. A Team Leader will be chosen to provide overall guidance to the team.

The Evaluation Team shall consist of a minimum of four trained members from the following job categories:

- superintendent
- building level principal
- curriculum coordinator
- teacher
- school board member

The Mississippi Department of Education shall assist the team from a staffing standpoint to help organize and facilitate the evaluation and assist in the pre-onsite analysis of data. Optional team members in specialized areas will be utilized if needed. These team members could include an individual with expertise and knowledge in such areas as vocational education, special education, federal programs, technology, etc. For each year that a school continues to be a School at Risk, an evaluation team assigned by the Mississippi Department of Education will review the performance of the school and re-evaluate the school annually.

School Evaluation Procedures

Financial Report: The school, in cooperation with the local school district, shall submit appropriate financial information to the Evaluation Team. The Team shall have the authority to request any and all financial documentation that it deems necessary. Upon such request, the school shall release the requested information to the Team.

Desk Audit: The Evaluation Team and appropriate staff of the Mississippi Department of Education will collaboratively analyze and discuss the targeted school's data to determine probable areas of weaknesses before conducting an on-site visit. Based on the data analysis of the School at Risk, a detailed checklist will be specifically developed for each team member in his/her specialized area to be used in the on-site visit.

On-site Evaluation: While conducting the on-site visit, questions developed from the checklist will be reviewed and a continuing evaluation of data will be conducted. If necessary, other individuals in specialty areas (such as a technology or special education coordinator, etc.) will be called in to evaluate the school and participate as a team member.

Evaluation Report: After completing an evaluation of a School at Risk, each evaluation team member will write an individual report containing findings and recommendations for improvement, including personnel issues. All members will meet as a group, reach a consensus about the findings and write a school evaluation report. The school evaluation report shall identify personnel who were found to be in need of participation in a professional development plan. The school evaluation report will be submitted to the State Superintendent of Education for review and approval.

Development of School Improvement Plan: Following the report's approval by the State Superintendent of Education, a representative from the Mississippi Department of Education and the Evaluation Team Leader will present the evaluation report to local school officials. Later, at a locally advertised town meeting, they will present the evaluation report to the community.

Based on the findings of the report and results of the town meeting, the Mississippi DOE and the Evaluation Team Leader will assist local school officials and the local community in the development of a **School Improvement Plan**. A local Parent Advisory Committee will be established at the School at Risk, in order to provide input and guidance into the development of the School Improvement plan and its evaluation during the year. Local Parent Teacher Associations/Parent Teacher Organizations will have input in the selection of this Parent Advisory Committee. Where no active local Parent Teacher Association/Organization exists, the Mississippi Department of Education will solicit assistance from the state level Parent Teacher Associations in the selection of the Parent Advisory Committee. The School Improvement Plan must be approved by the principal and teachers of a Priority School and by the superintendent and school board members of that district. Involving multiple organizations, interests and perspectives will offer the most successful results for improving student performance. This process will also ensure local ownership of the solutions and outcomes and provide access to available resources.

Appointment of Assistance Team: An Assistance Team consisting of Mississippi Department of Education employee(s) will then be assigned to the Priority School to provide technical assistance in the implementation of the school improvement plan.

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?*

Terra Nova testing will be administered in grades three through eight. Title I high schools will have to test in one grade only of the ten through twelve grade span using Terra Nova for spring 1999-2000. Non-Title I high schools will not be required to do this.

2. *What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:*

- *Title I schools and non-Title I schools*
- *Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools*
- *Districts*

Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?

Adequate yearly progress was not defined under the district system of accreditation, but the new system recently approved by the legislature under Senate Bill 2488 is intended to address this federal requirement (*see accountability section*).

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?*

A process beyond the district accreditation system for all districts was not developed to address adequate yearly progress.

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?*

Such criteria and processes were not specific to Title I and all districts have operated under the system of district accreditation outlined; district accreditation has been the system used for identifying districts in need of improvement. In past years, a process for adapting the district standards to compare against corresponding schoolwide average test scores in relevant grades and tests was used to identify Title I schools in need of improvement.

For the 1999-2000 school year, standards will be set for spring 2000 Terra Nova results whereby Title I schools exceeding a certain percentage of students in the lowest quarter (national norms) will be identified for improvement. For subsequent years, a school and district level

accreditation system will be in place for all schools and districts, Title I or otherwise and will be used for IASA identification purposes.

5. *What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?*

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

Assistance was not specific to Title I and has not varied from the assistance provided to all districts and schools. Personnel from the Offices of Instructional Development, Innovative Support, and other MDE offices have provided assistance to Level 1 and 2 districts. A significant proportion of MDE personnel from these offices have this assistance as their primary job description. Two Level 1 districts are now in conservatorship (they have been "taken over" by the MDE). Assistance is given to Level 3-5 districts as requested, in addition to normal MDE sponsored conferences, staff development sessions, etc.

6. *Who provides the assistance?*

Technical assistance has been provided to all districts and schools as needed under the system of district accreditation and support by personnel from the Offices of Instructional Development and Innovative Support, as well as other MDE offices.

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

The United State Department of Education has issued waivers to Mississippi as the state works to develop a system of assessment and accountability that is in line with the federal requirements under the IASA.

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?*

The new system approved by the legislature will address many of the requirements under the IASA. Growth expectations, a school-based accountability system and additional inclusion policies have been proposed, along with other initiatives, to bring the state into alignment with federal regulations.

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

Although the Title I and non-Title I accountability systems have been aligned, the district accreditation system did not include adequate yearly progress.

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

The state has been working to address the math testing requirement for grades 10-12, but have not been able to do so at this time in a final format. The Terra Nova will be used this year to fill

that requirement. The new system (Senate Bill 2488) will address many of the IASA requirements (*see accountability section*). The state has been issued a waiver as they continue the process of changing their assessment and accountability systems.

Contact Information

Assessment

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Table 1
Level 3 Performance Standards
Phase I

Performance Standard		Absolute Minimum Value	Annual Minimum Value	Maximum Value
1. FLE	Reading	246.0	TBD ²	257.5
2. FLE	Math	243.0	TBD	257.5
3. FLE	Written Comm.	240.0	TBD	255.0
4. ITBS	GR4 Reading	37.0	TBD	40.0
5. ITBS	GR4 Lang	37.0	TBD	40.0
6. ITBS	GR4 Math	37.0	TBD	40.0
7. PAI	GR4 Int. Lang Arts	400.0	TBD	500.0
8. PA	GR4 Math	400.0	TBD	500.0
9. ITBS	GR5 Reading	37.0	TBD	40.0
10. ITBS	GR5 Lang	37.0	TBD	40.0
11. ITBS	GR5 Math	37.0	TBD	40.0
12. PA	GR5 Int. Lang Arts	400.0	TBD	500.0
13. PA	GR5 Math	400.0	TBD	500.0
14. ITBS	GR6 Reading	37.0	TBD	40.0
15. ITBS	GR6 Lang	37.0	TBD	40.0
16. ITBS	GR6 Math	37.0	TBD	40.0
17. PA	GR6 Int. Lang Arts	400.0	TBD	500.0
18. PA	GR6 Math	400.0	TBD	500.0
19. ITBS	GR7 Reading	37.0	TBD	40.0
20. ITBS	GR7 Lang	37.0	TBD	40.0
21. ITBS	GR7 Math	37.0	TBD	40.0
22. PA	GR7 Int. Lang Arts	400.0	TBD	500.0
23. PA	GR7 Math	400.0	TBD	500.0
24. ITBS	GR8 Reading	37.0	TBD	40.0
25. ITBS	GR8 Lang	37.0	TBD	40.0
26. ITBS	GR8 Math	37.0	TBD	40.0
27. PA	GR8 Int. Lang Arts	400.0	TBD	500.0
28. PA	GR8 Math	400.0	TBD	500.0
29. TAP	GR9 Reading	37.0	TBD	40.0
30. TAP	GR9 Lang	37.0	TBD	40.0
31. TAP	GR9 Math	37.0	TBD	40.0
32. PA	GR9 Int.Lang Arts	400.0	TBD	500.0
33. PA	GR9 Math	400.0	TBD	500.0
34. SATP	Algebra 1	285.0	TBD	290.0
35. SATP	U.S. History	285.0	TBD	290.0
36. SATP	Biology 1	285.0	TBD	290.0
37. Percent < Q I		N/A	< 30% on 7 of 10 tests	N/A

¹PA=Performance Assessment

TBD indicates that the annual minimum value is "to be determined." The annual value on these variables will always fall between the absolute minimum and maximum values established by the State Board of Education. The procedure used for establishing the annual minimum values for these variables is described in the narrative under the heading "How the Annual Minimum Values Are Set" (page 22).

Table 2
Level 5 Performance Standards
Phase 2

Performance Standard	Annual Minimum Value
1. FLE Reading	Mean of D distriCtS2
2. FLE Math	Mean of L3 districts
3. FLE Written Comm.	Mean of L3 districts
4. ITBS GR4 Reading	Mean of L3 districts
5. ITBS GR4 Lang	Mean of L3 districts
6. ITBS GR4 Math	Mean of L3 districts
7. PAI GR4 Int. Lang Arts	Mean of L3 districts
8. PA GR4 Math	Mean of L3 districts
9. ITBS GR5 Reading	Mean of L3 districts
10. ITBS GR5 Lang	Mean of L3 districts
11. ITBS GR5 Math	Mean of L3 districts
12. PA GR5 Int. Lang Arts	Mean of L3 districts
13. PA GR5 Math	Mean of L3 districts
14. ITBS GR6 Reading	Mean of L3 districts
15. ITBS GR6 Lang	Mean of L3 districts
16. ITBS GR6 Math	Mean of L3 districts
17. PA GR6 Int. Lang Arts	Mean of L3 districts
18. PA GR6 Math	Mean of L3 districts
19. ITBS GR7 Reading	Mean of L3 districts
20. ITBS GR7 Lang	Mean of L3 districts
21. ITBS GR7 Math	Mean of L3 districts
22. PA GR7 Int. Lang Arts	Mean of L3 districts
23. PA GR7 Math	Mean of L3 districts
24. ITBS GR8 Reading	Mean of L3 districts
25. ITBS GR8 Lang	Mean of L3 districts
26. ITBS GR8 Math	Mean of L3 districts
27. PA GR8 Int. Lang Arts	Mean of L3 districts
28. PA GR8 Math	Mean of L3 districts
29. TAP GR9 Reading	Mean of L3 districts
30. TAP GR9 Lang	Mean of L3 districts
31. TAP GR9 Math	Mean of L3 districts
32. PA GR9 Int. Lang Arts	Mean of L3 districts
33. PA GR9 Math	Mean of L3 districts
34. SATP Algebra I	Mean of L3 districts
35. SATP U.S. History	Mean of L3 districts
36. SATP Biology I	Mean of L3 districts
37. Percent < Q I	< 25% on 7 of 10 tests
38. Graduation Rate	75.0%

'PA=Performance Assessments

The average NCE or scaled score of the districts that meet the required percentage of Level 3 performance standards (Mean of L3 districts)

Table 3
1998-1999 Performance Index

	Number of Variables	Number Met	Percent Met	Index	
Phase 2					
5	38	38	100.0%	5.0	
4	38	37	97.4%	4.9	
	38	36	94.7%	4.7	
	38	35	92.1%	4.5	
	38	34	89.5%	4.3	
	38	33	86.8%	4.1	
3	38	31-32	81.6-84.2%	3.9	
	38	29-30	76.3-78.9%	3.8	
	38	27-28	71.1-73.7%	3.7	
	38	25-26	65.8-68.4%	3.6	
	38	23-24	60.5-63.2%	3.5	
	38	21-22	55.3-57.9%	3.4	
	38	19-20	50.0-52.6%	3.3	
	38	17-18	44.7-47.4%	3.2	
	38	15-16	39.5-42.1%	3.1	
	38	<=14	<=36.8%	3.0	
Phase 1					
3	37	34-37	91.9-100%	3.0	
2	37	33	89.2%	2.9	
	37	32	86.5%	2.8	
	37	31	83.8%	2.7	
	37	30	81.1%	2.6	
	37	29	78.4%	2.5	
	37	28	75.7%	2.3	
	37	27	73%	2.2	
	37	26	70.3%	2.0	
	1	37	25	67.6%	1.9
		37	24	64.9%	1.8
37		23	62.2%	1.7	
37		22	59.5%	1.6	
37		21	56.8%	1.5	
37		20	54.1%	1.4	
37		19	51.4%	1.3	
37		18	48.6%	1.2	
37		17	45.9%	1.1	
37		<=16	<=43.2%	1.0	