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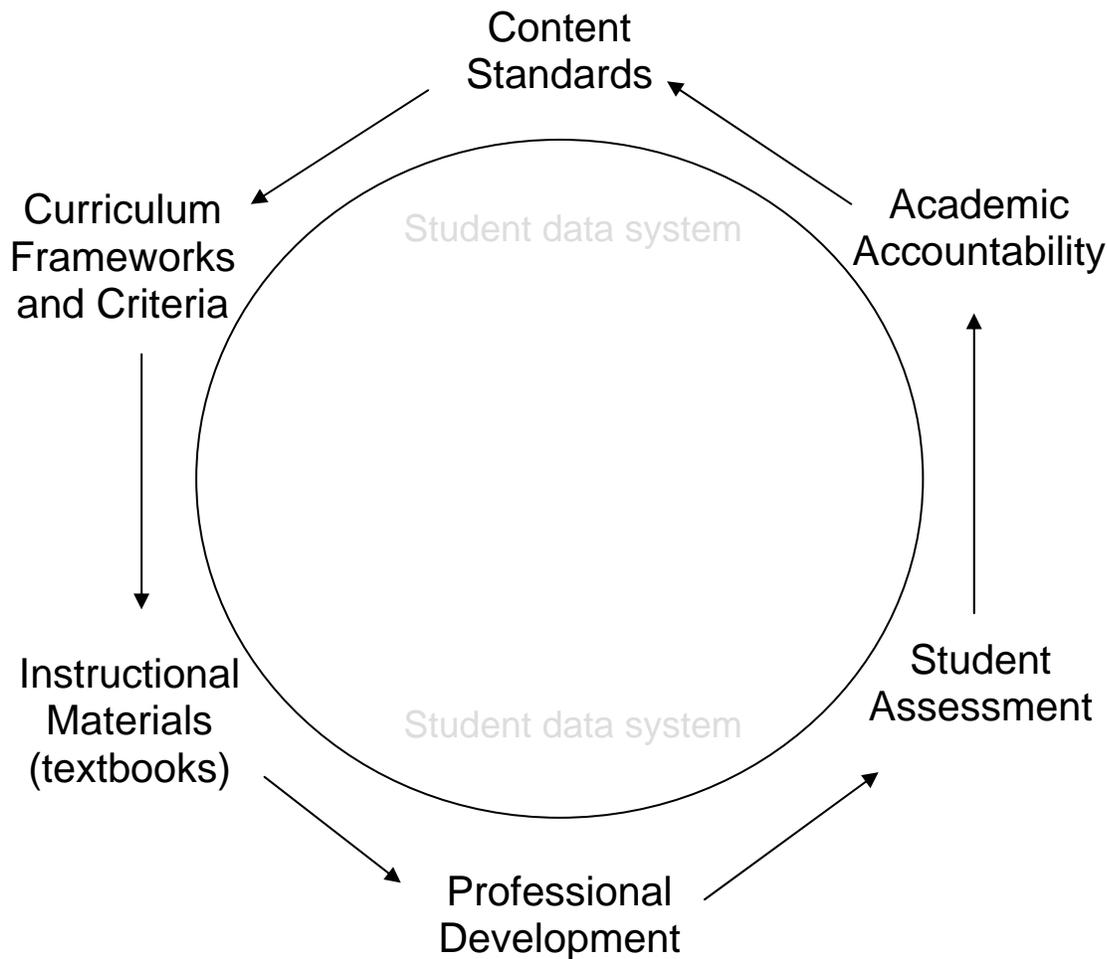
Testimony for Little Hoover Commission
Public Hearing on Educational Governance and Accountability
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Accountability for student performance should most effectively be viewed in the context of the outcomes that the system is designed to achieve and the components of the system designed to reach those outcomes. It is difficult to analyze the system of state-level accountability requirements for schools and school districts without first understanding the desired outcomes and the relevant inputs that make that system operational.

This written testimony is meant to set a baseline of understanding of California's standards-based instruction and accountability system, and then to more fully explain the specific components of the accountability regime meant to hold the state and local schools and school districts accountable for performance within that system. This testimony also outlines the role of the State Board of Education in designing and implementing those systems.

Section I – Introduction to the State's Standards-based Educational System

In the mid-to-late 1990s the State Board of Education (the Board), in conjunction with then-Governor Pete Wilson and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, embarked upon the process of creating content standards for the state's primary content areas, with the purpose being the development of one common set of content expectations for every public school student in California. These content standards were the beginning of the design of a cohesive educational approach created to marshal California's educational resources in a common direction. This system includes the content standards, curriculum and instructional materials, professional development, student assessments, and accountability measures. The graphic below is meant to depict the system as it fits together.



Content Standards

The content standards form the fundamental building block of a standards-based system. They define the knowledge and content that students should know at each grade-level for each content area. For example, in second grade mathematics, in the geometry content cluster, one content standard reads “[students] measure the length of an object to the nearest inch and/ or centimeter.” California has adopted content standards for each grade in English/language arts and history/social science, and for each grade in mathematics and science until the upper grade levels where the standards are content-specific instead of grade-level specific (examples include Algebra II in mathematics and physics in science in the upper grades).

A standards-based educational system depends on clearly articulated content standards that define specific expectations, upon which the rest of the system is built. The accountability regime then measures progress in relation to mastery of these standards.

Curriculum Frameworks and Criteria

Following adoption of the content standards, are Board-adopted curriculum frameworks and criteria. The frameworks are the blueprints for implementing the state-adopted content standards, and the evaluation criteria specifically guide the expert panels that evaluate the alignment with instructional materials (textbooks) with the content standards. These frameworks and criteria are the primary guide

for the development of instructional materials (textbooks) in a manner that aligns directly with the content standards. The framework also provides guidance to teachers and instructors to help students achieve mastery of the content.

Instructional Materials

Once a framework and criteria have been developed and adopted by the Board, interested publishers begin development of instructional materials to meet the evaluation criteria and in accordance with the road map laid out in the framework. These instructional materials are developed under a tightly prescribed time-frame and are reviewed by State Board-approved panels of experts in the pertinent content field of discipline. These panels review the instructional materials for alignment to the content standards per the evaluation criteria and review the content for veracity based on current and confirmed research. These panels recommend adoption or rejection of instructional materials based on these criteria.

Through the state's instructional materials funding program, school districts are allocated funding on an annual basis to purchase instructional materials that are aligned to the State Board of Education approved content standards. In grades Kindergarten through eight, this means school districts must purchase from a state-approved list of instructional materials. In the upper grades, the State Board does not adopt materials, so school districts must purchase materials aligned to the state content standards. This tie between textbook funding and the state's approved instructional materials helps to ensure that local educational agencies use textbooks aligned to the state's content standards.

Professional Development

The state legislature has approved, and given the State Board of Education responsibility for implementing, two professional development programs that focus on training teachers how to implement state standards-based instructional programs. These training programs, the Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program and the Administrator Training Program, are designed to fund teacher and administrator training on the state-adopted instructional materials programs. This alignment of professional development with the standards-based instructional materials helps teachers and administrators implement these instructional programs at the school site.

Student Assessment

The statewide pupil assessment system is a legislatively-approved assessment program that annually measures student achievement on a series of grade-level, content-specific criterion referenced assessments. When developing these assessments, the State Board of Education and the California Department of Education have ensured alignment to the state's content standards for a given grade-level and content area by first adopting a blueprint that directly maps the assessment to the pertinent grade-level content standards. The blueprint also places emphasis on specific clusters of content standards by dictating the proportion of the assessment dedicated to a given content cluster. These blueprints are developed upon the recommendation of statewide panels of educators with expertise in a given content area. Through the assessment blueprints, the Board ensures direct correlation to the content standards for that given grade-level and establishes the relative importance of specific content clusters within a content area.

The two primary components of the student assessment system, for accountability purposes, are the STAR (Student Testing and Reporting) program, and the CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam). The STAR program includes end-of-year or end-of-course assessments for each of the major

content areas (English/language arts, mathematics, history/social science, and science) in grades two through eleven. The CAHSEE is an English/language arts and mathematics exam at the high school level that students must pass, with few exceptions, to be eligible for a high school diploma.

Academic Accountability

There are two general components of an accountability program –the measurement used, and the consequence taken. In general terms, in California, the benchmark or desired outcome for accountability is demonstrated competence on the state’s adopted content. At the school and school district level, the benchmark is an aggregation of individual student performance on the assessments that are aligned with the content standards – the STAR and CAHSEE exams.

In the California state academic accountability system, the measurement instrument is the Academic Performance Index, which is a school and district-level indicator of the student population’s performance on the standardized assessments. The measure used by the federal government to ensure accountability under the *No Child Left Behind Act* is Adequate Yearly Progress. This measure is also predominantly based on the state’s STAR and CAHSEE programs, but is calculated differently, as will be described further below.

In California, the State Board of Education has responsibility to assign consequences to schools and school districts that do not achieve their desired academic achievement benchmarks. As will be described in detail below there are both state and federal systems of consequences – Program Improvement being the federal-level system and two state-level programs being the II/USP and High Priority Schools Grant Program.

Student data system

The standards-based instructional system described above cannot be operationalized without a means of gathering and housing student performance data. Today, in California, we gather data on a year by year basis but have limited ability to gather and track data on an individual student over a period of multiple years. The California Department of Education (CDE) has begun the process of developing a database (the California Longitudinal Pupil Assessment Data System or CALPADS) that will enable the state to gather and track individual student data over time: however, that system is not yet in place. The lack of such a system creates certain limitations for our statewide accountability program.

Summary

Accountability is an essential component of the state’s comprehensive standards-based education system and should be studied with the broader context in mind. As noted above, by way of example, there will be certain limitations on our accountability system due to the lack of a comprehensive statewide longitudinal pupil data system. Similarly, other aspects a state’s system may be purposefully constructed in a manner that can impact or limit what may be accomplished with a state’s accountability system. It is useful to consider the approach to accountability in relation to the design and desired outcomes for the system as a whole.

Section II – Academic Accountability

California’s K-12 public education system is held to two systems of accountability – the federal program under NCLB and the state-developed program, under the Public Schools Accountability Act,

which pre-dated the NCLB requirements enacted in 2001. Thinking of accountability via the construct of measures and consequences described above, the following chart provides a summary picture of the accountability landscape in California, which will be detailed further below.

	NCLB - federal	PSAA - state
Measures	AYP	API
Consequences	Program Improvement	II/USP HPSGP

The State Board of Education has responsibility for both the state and federal accountability programs. The federal government assigns responsibility to the state educational agency, which, in California, is the State Board of Education. While the Board has ultimate authority, this responsibility has traditionally been shared with the CDE, which has the resource capacity to help implement, execute and monitor these programs. Under the state’s PSAA program, the Board has been given legislative authority to oversee these programs, which, in many instances, is both legislatively and pragmatically shared with the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the CDE. Ultimately, however, the Board bears significant policy-making and oversight responsibility for both the federal and state accountability programs.

No Child Left Behind – the federal accountability system

1. Adequate Yearly Progress

The federal NCLB Act uses Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as its measure to hold both schools and local educational agencies (LEAs, e.g., school districts and county offices of education) accountable to achieve student performance. The ultimate objective for schools and school districts under the AYP methodology is for one-hundred percent (100%) of students in California public schools to achieve grade-level proficiency on the STAR English/Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics exams by the year 2013-2014. AYP measures performance for all students and for student subgroups by the percentage of students achieving grade-level proficiency.

The AYP can best be described by outlining the following characteristics:

- Four measures of student performance:
 - 95% student participation rate
 - Annual proficiency targets in ELA and math

- One point annual growth on the API
- Graduation rate percentage target (high schools and LEAs)
- Status Model – AYP measures school and LEA performance as a snapshot at a particular moment in time. The measure fairly simply tracks whether a school or LEA has made its target percentage of students scoring at proficient or above on the state STAR tests, or CAHSEE test in high school. AYP does not currently provide credit for performance growth over time.
- To meet its AYP targets, a school or LEA must meet the targets for all significant subgroups, in addition to meeting the program-wide targets.

A school's AYP targets increase as the target year 2013-2014 approaches. Annual AYP targets for all students and for subgroups are generally the same, however these targets differ slightly, depending on the type of school or district (e.g. elementary vs. high school). Targets increase over time. For example, in 2001-02, AYP proficiency targets for elementary and middle schools ranged from 13.6% for English-Language Arts (ELA) to 16% for math. The high school targets were 11.2% for ELA and 9.6% for math. In 2004-05, the elementary and middle school targets increased to 24.4% for ELA and 26.5% for math, and high school proficiency targets rose to 22.3% for ELA and 20.9% for math. The targets rise again in 2007-08 to 35.2% for ELA and 37% for math in elementary and middle schools, and 33.4% for ELA and 32.2% for math in high schools. Targets then increase each year by approximately 10-11% until the goal of 100% proficient is achieved in 2013-14.

2. Program Improvement

A Title I school that does not meet its AYP targets for two consecutive years will be subject to the NCLB Program Improvement (PI) corrective actions program. NCLB has a tiered approach to PI corrective actions that increases in rigor and severity as schools and LEAs fail to demonstrate improvement. To exit PI, a school or LEA must meet its targets for two consecutive years.

Corrective actions differ somewhat for schools and LEAs. LEAs are the primary body responsible for implementing and enforcing corrective actions for schools that enter Program Improvement. The Program Improvement actions for schools are:

- Year 1 – the school must offer parents the right to school choice, including LEA-funded transportation to another district school that is not in PI. The school must revise its LEA plan to complete a school improvement plan
- Year 2 – in addition to the year 1 actions, the school must also offer supplemental educational services to eligible students
- Year 3 – the LEA must take corrective action, which entails,
 - Replacing relevant school staff
 - Instituting and fully implementing a new curriculum
 - Significantly decreasing school management authority
 - Appoint external expertise
 - Extend the school day or school year
 - Restructure the internal governance of the school
- Year 4 – make a plan to restructure the governance of the school
- Year 5 – implement the plan to restructure the governance of the school

Unlike school-based PI, Program Improvement at the LEA level falls under the responsibility of the state education agency, which is the State Board of Education. The Program Improvement actions for LEAs are:

- Year 1 – the SEA must notify parents of the LEA's failure to make progress and the ramifications, and the LEA must revise its plan to complete an LEA improvement plan.

- Year 2 – the LEA must implement the improvement plan.
- Year 3 – the SEA must take corrective action, which entails,
 - Replacing relevant LEA staff
 - Instituting and fully implementing a new curriculum
 - Reducing or deferring Title I funds
 - Removing schools from the LEAs jurisdiction
 - Appointing a trustee or receiver for the LEA
 - Abolishing or restructuring the LEA
 - Authorizing student transfer to another LEA

One point that is worth consideration regarding the effectiveness and extent of federal Program Improvement sanctions is that this program applies only to those schools and LEAs that receive federal Title I funds. This requirement naturally limits the reach and effectiveness of the federal accountability program.

Public Schools Accountability Act – California’s accountability system

1. Academic Performance Index (API)

The PSAA measures school and school district performance using the Academic Performance Index (API) which is a numerical value between 200 and 1,000, based on students’ STAR results, with each school’s accountability goal being 800. An API is calculated for all pupils schoolwide and for each numerically significant pupil subgroup. There are four categories of subgroups: racial or ethnic groups, English learners, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with disabilities.

- The API includes a school’s scores from the STAR testing program for ELA, mathematics, science and history/social science. Within the API, California has made the choice that it will hold schools accountable for their growth in performance on a broader range of key subjects than only ELA and math.
- Improvement model - instead of measuring school performance by the percent of students proficient, as is done in the federal AYP methodology, the API provides schools with an annual improvement target. This target is expressed as a percentage of the difference between the actual schoolwide or subgroup API and 800.
- To meet its overall accountability target for a given year, a school must attain both its schoolwide and subgroup targets.

The PSAA holds schools and their significant subgroups accountable to meet annual growth targets toward an overall API score of 800. That annual growth target for the schoolwide API is equal to five percent of the difference between a school’s current API base score and 800, with a minimum increase of 5 points. For example, a school achieving a schoolwide API base score of 640 would have a growth target in the following year of eight points $((800 - 640) * .05 = 8 \text{ points})$.

2. California state sanctions programs

Whether or not a school is subject to sanctions under the PSAA is determined as a result of its ability to meet its annual API growth targets. California currently does not have a sanctions and accountability program that focuses on LEA-wide improvement for failure to make academic progress.

California has two sanctions and interventions programs for those schools failing to make their API growth targets – the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP) and the Immediate

Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). It is worth noting that the II/USP program is being phased out so that only the HPSGP will remain.

California's PSAA approach to sanctions and interventions includes two alternative paths for those programs participating in either the HPSGP or the II/USP program. Under both programs, the Board, in conjunction with the Superintendent, has the authority to either impose one of a litany of corrective actions for schools failing to make progress or to direct the school district to implement a School Assistance and Intervention Team (SAIT) for the failing school(s).

The HPSGP and II/USP programs are conceptually similar, participation in both is voluntary for qualified schools, and both take a similar approach to sanctions and interventions. Because the state is phasing out the II/USP program and replacing it with the HPSGP, it is useful to focus on that program as representative of the state's approach.

A school that fails to meet API growth targets is given funding and support to focus on school improvement and is required to develop and implement a school improvement plan. Eligible schools are those in the bottom five deciles, beginning with top priority given to schools in the lowest API decile ranks. Eligible programs are approved as funding permits. Participating schools must develop a school improvement plan and are given thirty-six months to implement this plan and make progress from the time funding is received.

The objective of the state intervention programs is to provide schools with additional assistance to help them meet their API growth targets. There is a series of academic accountability triggers within the HPSGP to determine if a school is making progress:

- A school in the HPSGP exits the program if it achieves its API growth targets in two of its three years of participation and achieves positive API growth in each of the three years.
- A school that does not achieve these targets, and therefore does not exit the program, will continue in the program and take one of two paths depending on whether the school has or has not achieved "significant growth" as determined by the Board
- For a school that has achieved "significant growth" it remains in the program on watch status.
- For a school that has not achieved "significant growth" it is deemed state-monitored and is subject to one of the state imposed sanctions described above.

The Board has defined "Significant growth" as achieving at least ten total API points and positive API growth in two of the past three years.

A school that becomes state-monitored, after failing to meet its progress targets for thirty-six months, shall be subject to further state sanction by the Board. For a school in this situation, under the HPSGP, the Board and the Superintendent shall do one of the following:

- Assign a School Assistance and Intervention Team to the school, OR
- Assume the legal rights, duties, and powers of the school's governing board, and reassign the school's principal

And,

- Revise attendance options for pupils attending that school
- Allow parents to apply to the State Board of Education to establish a charter school
- Assign the management of the school to a third party organization
- Reassign other certificated employees of the school
- Renegotiate the collective bargaining agreement
- Reorganize the school

- Close the school
- Place a trustee at the school

The Board's preferred approach has been to impose a SAIT as the first method of intervention, providing school districts with the expertise and resources to implement their locally identified needs for improvement. The Board has preferred this approach because it leaves authority and responsibility for improvement in the hands of the school district and it focuses direct intervention effort and expertise on the Board's prescribed nine essential components of effective school programs. This process ensures that the school is fully implementing the state content standards, using standards-aligned instructional materials, and providing staff with necessary professional development, as well as other Board-identified priorities for effective school programs (see the State Board of Education's Nine Essential Program Components for more information). The SAIT process has thus far proven effective at improving student and school performance in the majority of schools in which it has been implemented.