

**Developing A District and
School Accountability System:
Rationale and Sample
Materials**

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Preface

A District and School Accountability System: Rationale and Sample Materials is a work in progress developed by Richard Sagor and colleagues from the Region III Comprehensive Center at the George Washington University. It was developed with a dual purpose:

- As a “think piece” to assist Abbott and other districts as they develop a local accountability system, and
- As a resource that will benefit from insights as districts implement an accountability system focused on student performance.

These materials were developed for Abbott districts that are in the process of developing a local accountability plan for submission to the New Jersey Department of Education. But they can be adopted or adapted by any district interested in designing an accountability system based upon the “rate” of improvement not comparative performance in relation to demographically different schools.

Funding for the Region III Comprehensive Center comes from the United States Department of Education. The views expressed in this publication are those of its authors and are not necessarily shared by the U.S. Department of Education.

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Introduction

Purpose - this packet of materials is a “work in progress” with a dual purpose. First, it has been prepared as a “think piece” to assist districts in the development of a local accountability system as mandated by the State of New Jersey in the Abbott implementation regulations. Second, as districts go through the process of developing a local accountability system we ask that they provide us with any insights that can inform this document’s continued development as it is our intent to publish a center document that can be shared with other (non-Abbott) districts.

Reform Context—One of the pressing issues facing schools and districts around the nation, as they engage in standards based reform, is accountability. Virtually every state is working on content and performance standards for student learning and in many cases have created an external accountability/state assessment system to measure student achievement.

In the New Jersey context, the state is administering new assessments aligned to the Core Curriculum Content Standards at grades 4, 8, and 11. In addition, the Abbott regulations require all districts and schools affected by the court decision to develop a local accountability system.

Based on the work being done in many states and districts around the country, new approaches to local accountability are emerging. These new approaches include:

- A focus on student performance
- A focus on schools as the unit of improvement, and
- Use of continuous improvement strategiesⁱⁱ

It is in line with these approaches that this document has been conceived.

The Abbott Decision – The New Jersey Supreme Court requires that all Abbott schools – elementary, middle, and high school – provide an education consisting of two program components:

- Curriculum and instruction aligned to the state’s Core Curriculum Content standards, and
- Supplemental programs that help their students overcome the extreme disadvantages of growing up in poverty.

These two foci call for different sorts of accountability measures. For curriculum and instruction issues aligned to state core curriculum content standards accountability measures ought to be based on student performance. Abbott funded early childhood programs can largely be held accountable to measures of student performance. However for other supplemental programs e.g., health and social services, accountability should be based upon service availability and delivery. Therefore measures of process and implementation are of primary importance.

This document will largely focus on accountability for curriculum and instruction. It is anticipated that the pupil education profile will include data on health and social service delivery.

6:19-1.5 Responsibilities of Local Districts
(h) The chief School Administrator shall establish a district-wide accountability system that includes both a system of rewards to recognize teachers, parents, and administrators who contribute to helping students attain the Core Curriculum Content standards, and a system of sanctions to be applied when an individual school fails to meet State standards.

Abbott Accountability Assumptions - Four assumptions guided our development of an Abbott Accountability Systemⁱⁱⁱ specifically the belief that:

- (1) The achievement of “optimal performance” can be achieved only through a series of system improvements and incremental gains.
- (2) The process of school improvement should involve site-based management consistent with the expectations of the court order and the regulations of the NJ Department of Education.
- (3) Curriculum and instructional decisions should be based upon valid and reliable data. Therefore an accountability system should be informed by multiple measures or what researchers call triangulation.
- (4) An accountability system based upon the “rate” of improvement not comparative performance in relation to demographically different schools.

Implementing “Accountability” Efficiently - New Jersey schools and specifically schools in Abbott districts are in a unique and challenging position – that of creating a new accountability system based on student performance. As a result, there are a number of challenges facing districts and schools as they implement local accountability systems.

One of the **first challenges** to face an Abbott district is finding a meaningful way to comply with the scope and timeline of the mandated local accountability system. We felt that given the time constraints faced by Abbott districts (a June 1, 1999 submission date) creating prototypes for policies, implementing regulations, and governance structures would foster efficiency. In this way the prototypes can be considered for either of two options – adoption or adaptation – based upon the appropriateness for the local situation.

The **second challenge** is building capacity at both the district and school levels to involve staff in a data-driven continuous school improvement process. The accountability system suggested in these materials focuses mainly on the governance of curriculum and instruction. It was written on the assumption that site based management processes e.g., school management teams, will be implemented at Abbott schools and that these democratic governance processes will impact all matters of school life. For that reason the prototypes were purposefully designed to be integrated into whatever site based management structures are already in place. But they also recommend that Abbott

Use technology for data collection e.g., a relational database for student achievement and bio-statistical reports.

schools create a new team (accountable to the school’s administration and school management team) that is focused exclusively on curriculum and instructional issues.

Compatibility with Existing and Proposed Site Based Structures -

The sample materials are based upon a three-part governance structure.^{iv} Put succinctly, a school governance/accountability system will be strong when it contains the three elements of:

- a) vision/mission,
- b) open and democratic participation in the decision making processes, and
- c) the means for collecting and analyzing performance data, will the likelihood of academic improvement be high.

However, it needs to be noted that, if even one of the three components is missing, failure is near inevitable. If an Abbott School lacks clarity and common understandings regarding essential purposes, the resulting efforts will lack coherence. Likewise, if a school has a clearly agreed upon purpose, but lacks an open and efficient process to effect the decisions necessary to achieve the purpose, the school will be unable to muster the support necessary to ensure compliance with decisions. Finally, even if a school has a noble purpose and has instituted a fair and democratic decision-making structure, yet, decision-making occurs absent valid, reliable, and credible data it is likely that faulty (even if well intentioned) decisions will be made.

The reader will note that each building level and district level “accountability system” contained in these materials is built upon those essential three legs of vision, process, and data in place.



Figure 1 “Three Legs of Accountability”

Based upon this analysis it is strongly suggested that each governance structure in an Abbott school attend to the “three legs of accountability.” If parents, non-parent patrons, students, and staff become accustomed to seeing at each level of the school organization:

- 1) Programs are implemented for reasons,
- 2) That decisions are made in accordance with agreed upon procedures and
- 3) Are informed by relevant data, then confidence in the system will be enhanced.

How to Use these Materials – To aid the reader’s understanding of the relationship between the components of the prototypes it is suggested that a preliminary review of the materials occur in the following order:

First: Review the two School Board Policies, on “School Improvement Planning Process” and “School Evaluation and Status Designation.” It is these policies that establish the obligation of the district to follow this path.

Second: Review the 2 sets of implementation regulations – “Implementing Regulations for School Improvement Plans” and “Implementing Regulations for School Status Designation and Rewards/Sanctions”. These outline the procedures and expectations of the district as it pertains to the Abbott schools.

Third: Read through the “District Accountability Plan.” This provides an approach that a district might use to organize itself to provide support for its schools with academic improvement.

Finally: Read through the two^v Building Level Accountability Plans. These should provide insights into how these regulations might be made to work in the day to day life of a school.

Definitions:

The prototypes contain abbreviations and terms that may not be familiar to the reader. For this reason the following glossary should prove helpful when reviewing the samples that follow.

RISING School District: The RISING (Rapidly Increasing Scores Indicate Noteworthy Growth) School District is a pseudonym for a NJ district that includes the Aiming High School and Beginning Right Elementary School.

ASSIST Administrator: This is an assistant Superintendent whose sole responsibility is oversight of the academic improvement process. ASSIST stands for Assistant Superintendent for School Improvement Supervision and Training.

TLIC: The Teaching and Learning Improvement Council. This is a representative group empowered by the school board and central administration to manage the Abbott school improvement process in the RISING School District.

SMT: School Management Team: The School Management Team is the decision making group with primary responsibility for management (along with the Principal) of the School Site. The School Management Team appoints the school’s CCC.

CCC: The Curriculum Coordinating Councils are representative committees on each school with responsibility for managing Abbott school improvement efforts at their site. The CCC’s are empowered by the School Management Team and the building administration.

PPTs: PPTs are Priority Performance Targets. Each school identifies PPTs annually. These are academic performances that must be mastered by the schools students in order to demonstrate achievement of the school’s mission.

PEPs: PEPs are Personal Educational Plans for each student at a school. Each PEP is expected to contain four components: (1) the student’s current reading and math status in relation to the school’s PPTs and the state’s Core Curriculum Content standards, (2) listing of performance areas where the student is particularly challenged or gifted, (3) planned activities to address student needs, and (4) expected level of performance at year’s end.

SIPs: A SIP is a School Improvement Plan. SIPs are created each year by the CCC to detail the “Priority Performance Targets” and the specific efforts that are to be undertaken to achieve improvement on the PPTs. The SIP should detail the staff development and curriculum revitalization efforts that the school intends to undertake.

Status Designations: Status Designations are descriptors of schools applied by the Board of Education on an annual basis indicating the degree of success achieved the previous year by the school on their SIP and related Abbott school improvement work.

R-CIM: R-CIM stands for the Rising Curriculum and Instructional Model. The R-CIM is the default program which the district will require schools to follow if the school has been shown to be ineffective with site-based management and has been placed on “probationary status” for more than two consecutive years.

Figure #2 below illustrates the relationship of the various components of the rising school district governance structure.

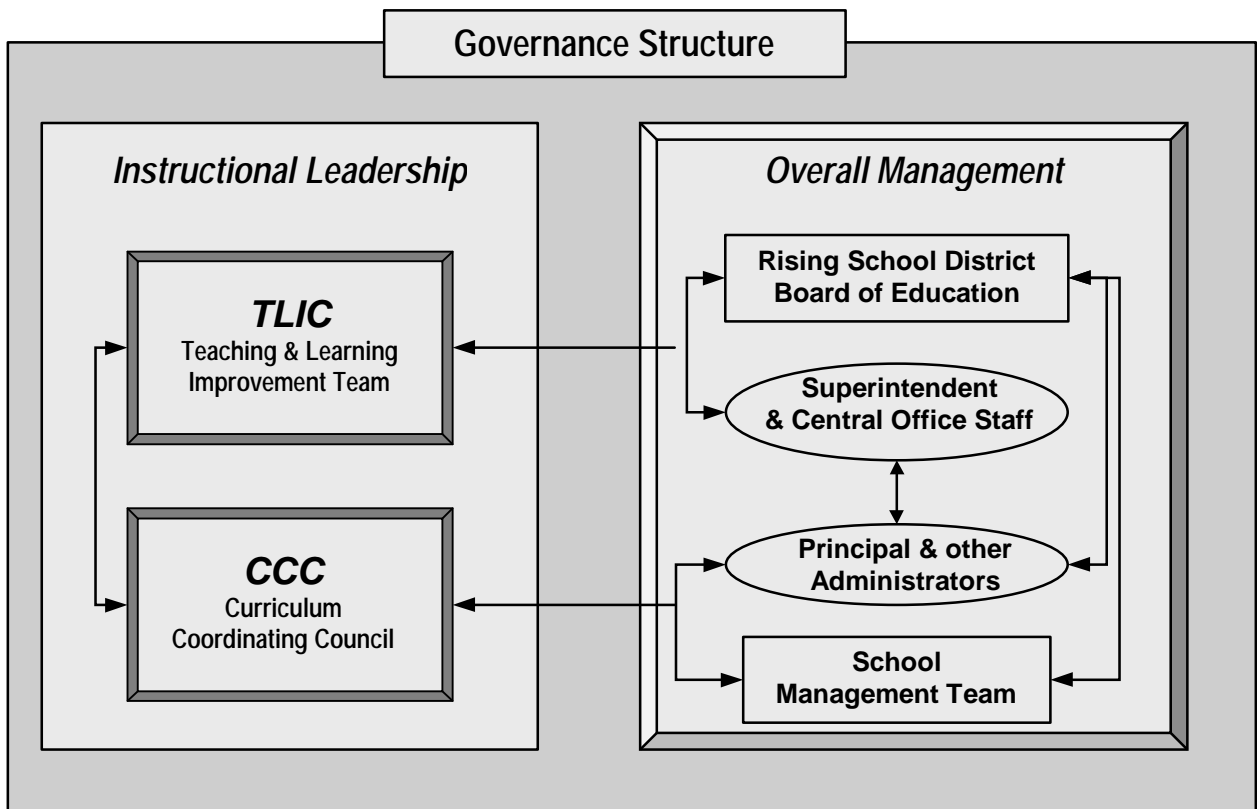


Figure 2 Governance Structure

RISING Public School District

Board Policy on the school improvement process (SIP)

The RISING school district is committed to the philosophy and practice of continuous improvement in all district operations.

In accordance with this commitment each school in the RISING Public School District is expected to annually develop, implement and assess a SIP (school improvement plan) aimed at improving academic performance.

The Superintendent of Schools is directed to develop regulations to assist schools in the development of their School Improvement Plans (SIPs). Furthermore, the Superintendent of Schools is to develop procedures to monitor school plans, their implementation and the results obtained. Finally, the Superintendent is to report to the board annually on the results obtained at each school.

RISING School District

Policy on school evaluation and status designation

The RISING school district is committed to assess academic improvement efforts at each district school. The Board of Education believes that outstanding accomplishments should be rewarded and when schools need additional support to become successful, it should be provided. Finally, in the unlikely event that a school continues to under-perform the Board of Education believes decisive action needs to be taken.

As a means to provide schools with recognition for excellence, support for improvement and, when necessary, sanctions for under-performance, the board has established a set of status designations which, upon board action, will be annually assigned to each school.

The status designations to be utilized shall be:

- *Recognized*-not only has the school met and/or exceeded performance targets, but, its implementation of school improvement makes it a valuable resource for other schools in the district to learn from.
- *Developing*-academic performance is improving in most priority areas.
- *Inadequate*-the pace of academic improvement is inadequate for many students and if allowed to continue at this rate shows little potential of meeting district goals.
- *Probationary*-the pace of academic improvement has remained inadequate despite targeted assistance.

RISING School District

Implementing Regulations for School Improvement Plans

- 1) It is the responsibility of each School Management Team to submit to the district's Teaching and Learning Improvement Council (TLIC) a completed and ratified School Improvement Plan (SIP) by September 30.
- 2) Prior to being submitted to the TLIC a SIP must be endorsed by at least 75% of the certified staff at the site.
- 3) To be considered complete a "School Improvement Plan" (SIP) must minimally contain:
 - a) A listing of "Priority Performance Targets" (PPTs) that will be the focus of the school's learning improvement efforts and the rationale for making these priority foci.
 - b) How performance on the PPTs will be assessed and monitored.
 - c) The anticipated level of performance on the PPTs to be achieved at the end of the year.
 - d) The activities/initiatives which will be used by the faculty to improve student performance on the PPTs
 - e) The professional development activities to be engaged in by the faculty to increase their capacity to produce success on the PPTs
 - f) A plan for the evaluation of the SIP. The evaluation plan must include multiple measures on performance on the PPTs.
- 4) The Teaching and Learning Improvement Council (TLIC) will review each SIP to ensure that it meets the minimal expectations of the district, the State of New Jersey and the Abbott court order.
- 5) Should the SIP be determined to be out of compliance with either district expectations, State regulations or the court order, it will be returned to the School Management Team for revision and re-ratification.
- 6) Should a SIP be returned for revision, the School Management Team will have 30 days to rework the SIP, gain faculty approval and re-submit the SIP.
- 7) If a school fails to submit an adequate SIP 30 days after the request for a revision the school is subject to designation as on "probation." Such a designation would result in a suspension of site based management privileges.
- 8) The end of year SIP assessment is due at the Assistant Superintendent for School Improvement, Supervision and Training (ASSIST) no later than June 30.

RISING School District

Implementing Regulations for School Status Designation and Rewards/Sanctions

- 1) The Assistant Superintendent for School Improvement, Supervision and Training (ASSIST Administrator) in consultation with the Teaching and Learning Improvement Council (TLIC) will conduct a review of each school's progress towards meeting state standards and fulfilling the goals of its school improvement plan (SIP) by June 30 of each school year.
- 2) Based upon their review of the school's SIP evaluation, the TLIC will develop a written evaluation report on the performance of each school. The TLIC will forward to the Superintendent a copy of each school's evaluation and the TLIC's recommendation for the school's status designation for the following year.
- 3) Authority for status designation will reside solely with the board of education.
- 4) Schools designated as "Recognized" will receive a program and professional development grant to be used for professional and/or program development at the discretion of the school's curriculum coordinating council.
- 5) Schools designated as "Developing" will receive a development grant (of an equal amount to that received by the recognized schools) however, grant funds are limited to further the implementation of the school's selected model program.
- 6) If the TLIC is recommending that a school be designated as making "inadequate progress" that TLIC recommendation will include a plan for targeted assistance and remediation. Schools ultimately designated by the Board of Education as making "inadequate progress" will also receive an improvement grant. However, schools making "inadequate progress" are to use their grant to support a targeted assistance plan as developed by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.
- 7) A school can only be designated as making "inadequate progress" for 2 consecutive years. Should a school's performance be deemed inadequate for 3 or more consecutive years, that school will be put on "probation."
- 8) Should a school be placed on "probation" by the Board of Education, the school's site-based governance privileges will be suspended. Furthermore, it will be required that the school implements the RISING Curriculum and Instructional Model (R-CIM) under the supervision and oversight of the ASSIST Administrator or his/her designee.
- 9) All discretionary resources to be spent at a school on "probation" must be approved in advance by the ASSIST Administrator.
- 10) The ASSIST Administrator and/or his/her designee will conduct the annual evaluation of schools on "probation".

Rapidly Improving Scores Indicate Noteworthy Gains (RISING) School District

Accountability Plan

Mission:

The RISING School District is committed to making the systemic changes necessary to support staff and students in the universal achievement of scholastic excellence. This commitment is based upon the belief that all children, including those coming to school with the greatest disadvantages, are capable of learning all the essential concepts, developing all the essential skills and producing the quality products that society expects of well educated students. Furthermore, the RISING School District expects its student body to meet or exceed the performance standards specified in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content standards.

In our view each of the administrative functions of the RISING School District exists for only one reason: to support the achievement of our students. For this reason we are committed to continuously evaluate and adjust our practices based upon their proven effectiveness in enhancing student performance.

Governance Process:

The RISING School District, a public school system in the state of New Jersey operates under the governance of an elected Board of Education which is vested with responsibility for managing the district's operations in accordance with the New Jersey Education code, federal regulations and adopted district policy. The board of education carries out its policy and oversight responsibilities through an appointed administration team lead by the Superintendent of Schools.

It is the responsibility of the RISING Superintendent to organize the central administration into a leadership team which will, consistent with board policy, provide each building the support and assistance necessary to achieve continuously improved academic performance.

Consistent with the Abbott regulations the Rising School District supports the concept of local control and the promise inherent in the school-based leadership philosophy. However, the board believes that school-based leadership must be seen as both a privilege and an opportunity that is only extended to schools so that they may better serve their students. Therefore, the Board of Education reserves to itself the right to suspend school-based management privileges for any school that has not made good use of its authority. Prior to suspending school-based management the board will extend considerable support to under performing schools through a program of "targeted assistance."

To foster its goal of continuous improvement, the district has established the position of Assistant Superintendent for School Improvement, Supervision and Training (hereafter called the ASSIST Administrator). The ASSIST Administrator reports directly to the Board of Education through the Superintendent of Schools. The ASSIST administrator's office has direct responsibility and authority for all Abbott school improvement work occurring in the RISING School District. In addition, the district has created the teaching and learning improvement council to work with the ASSIST administrator.

Responsibilities of the "Teaching and Learning Improvement Council" (TLIC) are:

- 1) Approval of all School Improvement Plans (SIPs).
- 2) Provision of technical assistance and training on instructional improvement for School Management Team members and members of school “Curriculum Coordinating Councils.”
- 3) Approval of SIP assessment plans.
- 5) Submission of annual reports to the Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education on the educational status of the district and the success of each school in meeting the performance targets detailed in the District and School Improvement Plans.
- 6) Conduct an annual “learning” assessment of all district schools.
- 7) Using “learning” assessment data and annual SIP evaluation reports the Teaching and Learning Improvement Council will recommend to the Board of Education appropriate “status designations” for each school. Annual accreditation designations are:
 - *Recognized*-not only has the school met and/or exceeded its performance targets, but, its implementation of school improvement makes it a valuable resource for other schools in the district to learn from.
 - *Proficient*-the pace of academic improvement is at or above the level necessary to meet the district mission in a timely manner.
 - *Developing*-academic performance is improving in most priority areas.
 - *Inadequate*-the pace of academic improvement is inadequate for many students and if allowed to continue at this rate shows little potential of meeting district goals.
- 7) The Teaching and Learning Improvement Council is responsible for negotiating remediation plans with the building leadership at all schools designated as “Inadequate.”
- 8) The Teaching and Learning Improvement Council is responsible for developing and managing the RISING Curriculum and Instructional Model. If and when the Board of Education places a school on “probation” that school will be required to faithfully implement the RISING Curriculum and Instructional Model (R-CIM).
- 9) In conjunction with the ASSIST Administrator’s office, the Teaching and Learning Improvement Council (TLIC) will be responsible for conducting the annual assessment of progress for schools on “probation.” If after conducting an evaluation of a school on probation, the TLIC feels that the rate of progress has substantially improved, then the council has the authority to ask the Board of Education to take the school off “probation.”

Data Collection Process and Procedures:

Student performance improvement in the RISING School District is expected to meet or exceed the rate of improvement in other New Jersey School Districts. If academic performance fails to improve at expected levels it is the responsibility of the Teaching

and Learning Improvement Council (TLIC) to recommend an appropriate compensatory response. To accomplish this the TLIC Council will:

- a) Annually track performance on the State and District assessment of all students who have been enrolled in the district from one test administration to the next.
- b) At each grade level the Teaching and Learning Improvement Council will prepare a report detailing the “Normal Curve Equivalent” scores for the RISING student body as well as an analysis of the performance of RISING students on each sub-test and with each sub-skill.
- c) If the average NCE scores of RISING students are declining, the Teaching and Learning Improvement Council will conduct a study of the causes for the decline and will review potential remedial actions. Recommended remediation could involve, but will not be limited to, consultation with model program developers and if deemed necessary consideration of programs not yet in use by Abbott districts.

Beginning Right Elementary School

Accountability Plan

Mission:

Beginning Right Elementary School (BRES) is committed to supporting each child in the development of the skills, attitudes and habits necessary to become a motivated life-long learner. To accomplish this BRES feels it is essential that each child be performing at grade level equivalency in literacy and mathematics before the end of 3rd grade or be placed on a realistic plan to achieve that level of performance prior to exiting the 6th grade. It is for this reason that BRES will only adopt and implement programs with convincing evidence or promise for bringing a diverse student body to basic skill proficiency.

Governance Process:

Rationale:

At BRES we believe that achieving academic excellence will require both vertical and horizontal coordination. This is because we deem it essential that basic educational content, expectation and assessments are consistent across classrooms at each grade level. While we deplore undue regimentation, we feel this degree of standardization is necessary if “receiving” teachers are to have confidence in the entry skills and prerequisite experiences of the students promoted to their classes.

Furthermore, at BRES we are committed to helping our students acquire a defined body of knowledge in all academic disciplines. To accomplish these goals we deem it essential that the scope and sequence of instruction be both logical and tight. For the above reasons the Beginning Right Elementary School’s “Curriculum Coordinating Council” (CCC) membership has been designed to include each grade level and each disciplinary specialization.

Process and Procedures:

Each grade level and each of the six (science, math, language arts, social studies, health) core curricular areas will annually designate a person to represent them for three years on the Curriculum Coordinating Council. Membership terms will be staggered to provide continuity.

The Curriculum Coordinating Council, in cooperation with the building principal, will have oversight and management responsibility over all matters concerning the “School Improvement Plan,” the “Priority Performance Targets,” and related instructional improvement efforts at Beginning Right Elementary School. To carry out these duties the CCC will have 3 primary functions:

- Communications
- Assessment
- Capacity building

Specifically the Curriculum Coordinating Council will coordinate **school communications** (regarding instructional improvement) by:

- 1) Developing an annual “State of the School Report Card.” This annual report card will detail progress on the attainment of school, student, and state goals, disaggregated by gender, race and ethnicity.
- 2) Facilitate cross grade level and cross discipline sharing and coordination when programs and goals transcend grade level or disciplinary divisions.
- 3) Make timely distribution of agendas and minutes for all Curriculum Coordinating Council meetings to all faculty members as well as other interested parties.
- 4) Present updates at each faculty meeting on “instructional improvement efforts.”
- 5) Plan and provide at least one instructional improvement in-service for the faculty each month.

The Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) will fulfill its **assessment** mission by:

- 1) Working with the faculty to develop a continuum of assessment criteria (a rubric) for each “Priority Performance Target” (PPT) in the School Improvement Plan.
- 2) Working with the faculty to develop benchmarks that correlate with the State and District assessments for on-going monitoring of student achievement in literacy and mathematics.
- 3) Conduct assessments and report to the faculty on student performance on adopted benchmarks, twice annually.
- 4) Based upon the data from the end of year assessment the CCC will recommend “Priority Performance Targets” (PPTs) to the school management team for incorporation into the following year’s school improvement plan (SIP).

The Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) will fulfill its **capacity building** mission through:

- 1) The management of the school’s staff development budget. The CCC will determine what percentage of the annual school staff development budget will be earmarked for each Priority Performance Target.
- 2) The CCC will be responsible for the organization of a monthly staff development faculty meeting and all other school-wide staff development experiences.
- 3) The CCC will award mini-grants to teachers or teams of teachers who wish to conduct pilot projects involving literacy, mathematics, or the school’s Priority Performance Targets.
- 4) The CCC may issue “Request for Proposals” (RFP) so members of the faculty who wish to conduct action research on innovative strategies for meeting the school’s Priority Performance Targets, improve literacy or mathematics proficiency can be supported in doing so.

Data Collection Process and Procedures:

At BRES we believe that school improvement is achieved “one student at a time.” For this reason the Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC), with faculty input, will develop a common format which can be used to profile each student’s progress towards the achievement of the school’s literacy and mathematics goals, the adopted Priority Performance Targets and State Standards. Grade level and school-wide assessments will be accomplished by “aggregating up” these reports on individual student progress.

Every student at BRES will have on file a Personal Educational Plan (PEP). Each PEP is expected to contain four components:

1. The student’s current status with regard to literacy, math, the school’s Priority Performance Targets and State Standards
2. A listing of any performance areas where the student is particularly challenged or gifted
3. Any planned activities or experiences which are deemed necessary for the remediation of below standard performance or the development of unusual talent, and
4. The expected level of performance at year’s end (on the State and District tests and the school’s benchmarks)

The end of year performance assessment at BRES will consist of four levels of analysis:

Level #1 of the end of year assessment will be a composite by age, race, gender and ethnicity of Pupil Education Plan achievement categories.

Level #2 data collection will be a report on the rate of improvement achieved on the annual State and/or District assessments.

Level #3 of end of year assessment will be a report of the implementation of the school’s whole school reform model.^{vi}

Level #4 based upon the data from the end of year assessment the CCC will recommend “Priority Performance Targets” (PPTs) to the school management team for incorporation into the following year’s school improvement plan (SIP).

Aiming High School

Accountability Plan

Mission:

Aiming High School (AHS) is committed to meeting the academic needs and post high school aspirations of its diverse student body. We believe each AHS student has a right to the guidance, education and support necessary in order for them to leave high school fully eligible to pursue their dreams. Consequently, we plan to hold ourselves accountable for assisting each student in the acquisition of skills, attitudes and attributes necessary for success at that student's next stage of life.

We will see to it that all instructional and support activities at AHS focus upon accomplishing the above mission.

Governance Process:

Aiming High School (AHS) is a complex comprehensive high school with numerous management functions that need constant attention. Our organizational complexity requires many decision-making structures and a variety of lines of authority. In spite of our size, we believe it is imperative that the responsibility and authority for managing academic improvement be clearly and unambiguously outlined. For that reason the procedures discussed in this document apply exclusively to our work on academic improvement.

The Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC), in cooperation with the building principal, has been delegated full oversight and control over all matters concerning instructional improvement at AHS. To carry out these duties the Curriculum Coordinating Council will work on 3 primary foci:

- Communications
- Assessment
- Capacity building

Specifically the Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) will coordinate **communications** on school improvement by:

- 1) Developing an annual "State of the School Report Card." The annual report card will detail progress on the attainment of student goals, State Standards, and Priority Performance Targets (PPTs). These results will be reported for the entire student body, by class and disaggregated by gender, race and ethnicity.
- 2) Facilitating cross-departmental sharing and coordination of all initiatives and/or goals that transcend traditional departmental or grade level configurations.
- 3) Make timely distribution of agendas and minutes from all CCC meetings.
- 4) Present updates on school improvement efforts at each faculty meeting and plans one instructional improvement in-service each month.

The Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) will fulfill its **assessment** mission by:

- 1) Working with the faculty to develop an assessment continuum (rubric) for each Priority Performance Target contained in the annual "School Improvement Plan."
- 2) Working with the faculty to develop benchmarks for use in monitoring performance of Aiming High School's (AHS) Priority Performance Targets.
- 3) Compile and report to the faculty on the status of student performance on the AHS benchmarks twice annually.
- 4) Based upon the end of year assessment the CCC will make recommendations to the School Management Team regarding priorities for the following year's School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) will fulfill its **capacity building** mission by:

- 1) Managing the school's staff development budget. The CCC will determine what percentage of the budget should be earmarked for which Priority Performance Targets.
- 2) The CCC will be responsible for the organization and delivery of all school wide staff development.
- 3) The council may fund mini-grants to support innovative pilot projects that are consistent with the Priority Performance Targets and the school's mission.
- 4) The Council may issue requests for proposals (RFP's) for the conduct of action research by teachers wishing to work on priority areas.

Data Collection Process and Procedures:

At Aiming High School (AHS) we believe that school improvement is achieved "one student at a time." For this reason the assessment work of the Curriculum Coordinating Council will begin with an examination of each student's performance in light of that student's goals.

Every student at AHS is to have on file a Personal Educational Plan (PEP). Each student's PEP will minimally have 3 components:

- a) The student's post high school aspirations
- b) The planned activities, classes and experiences deemed necessary for timely achievement of the student's post high school aspirations, and
- c) The rate of progress and/or a timeline for hitting the benchmarks that are necessary for realization of the student's post high school aspirations

An assessment profile will be developed for each student detailing progress on his or her PEP. The assessment profile will also contain data on the student's progress towards attainment of Priority Performance Targets and State Standards.

The data contained in each student's assessment profile will be "aggregated up" to produce a report on school-wide and grade level performance. The summary reports will be further disaggregated by race, gender and ethnicity.

The CCC will provide the faculty with an annual report card on school performance. The annual report card will provide 4 types of data:

Level #1 will be a report on PEP achievement disaggregated by age, race, gender and ethnicity.

Level #2 will be a report on the performance and rate of improvement of Aiming High School on the annual state assessment.

Level #3 is a report on the implementation of the whole school reform model^{vii}.

Level #4 The CCC will conduct assessments and issue reports to the faculty on any areas of student performance that the faculty deemed important enough to ask to have evaluated.

Endnotes

ⁱ We elected to provide only elementary and secondary templates. In our view a large Middle Level School could easily adapt the Secondary Template to fit their needs. A smaller Middle Level School would probably prefer to adapt the elementary template.

ⁱⁱ Fuhrman, S. H. (1999), *The New Accountability*. (CPRE Policy Brief No.RB-27). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

iii Abbott Accountability Assumptions

(1) The achievement of “optimal performance” can be achieved only through a series of system improvements and incremental gains.

The reader will note that each “accountability system” contains long-range organizational performance goals. This is because the models presented here were built to be consistent with the substance and intent of the Total Quality Movement. Specifically, the conviction that continuous improvement is fostered by the setting of unambiguous performance goals. These are specified in the vision section of each “accountability plan”. However, in a true Total Quality environment it is understood that goals are neither achieved over night or simply. The achievement of optimal performance can be achieved only through a series of system improvements and incremental gains.

Therefore, the prototypes contained in this document suggest that each Abbott school, based upon the previous year’s summative evaluation, set annual targets for student as well as system performance. The annual targets are called PPTs for “Priority Performance Targets”. It is our view that continuous improvement will only occur through continuous monitoring of PPTs chosen by stakeholders based on the belief that mastery of these targets will lead to the realization of the school’s ultimate vision.

(2) The process of school improvement should involve site-based management consistent with the expectations of the court order and the regulations of the NJ Department of Education.

The prototypes contained in these materials were designed to create an integrated accountability mosaic (see figure #2). These materials were drafted to be consistent with the expectations of the court order and the regulations of the NJ Department of Education. In addition, they seek to support the statutory responsibility of elected school boards. Specifically, local boards of education are charged with the responsibility to set policy, to direct the operation of the public schools, and to hire a Chief Executive Officer (Superintendent). The prototypes specify roles and responsibilities for district level staff who serve at the pleasure of the board.

To the greatest extent possible it is expected that district office personnel will provide direct support through staff development and other capacity building efforts. However, when appropriate and if necessary, district personnel (the representatives of the board of education) will be expected to intervene to assure that student needs aren’t neglected.

None of the above is meant to undermine the philosophy that sits at the heart of the Abbott process, specifically that most educational decision-making should occur as close to the action as possible: the level of the site governance structure, the teacher, and the students and their parents.

(3) Curriculum and instructional decisions should be based upon valid and reliable data. Therefore an accountability system should be informed by multiple measures or what researchers call triangulation.

Consistent throughout the prototypes is the expectation that educational decisions should be informed by multiple measures or what researchers call triangulation. The determination of a school's or student's success on a PPT ought to be based upon an analysis of multiple independent data sets. Employing such a process helps ensure both validity and reliability. More importantly, the use of multiple measures helps local governance councils understand the nuances of what is and what is not working as anticipated. The materials make reference to two specific types of reporting on performance:

- a) **Assessments.** As used in these prototypes assessment is analogous to formative (professional growth) evaluation. It occurs regularly (often continuously) and its purpose is to provide decision maker(s) e.g., the student, the Curriculum Coordinating Council, the Teaching and Learning Improvement Council, etc. with the data needed to make mid-course adjustments.
- b) **Evaluations.** At prescribed intervals (in the case of the developers models, annually) school evaluations are conducted and used to report to the board, the community, parents and students on the status of the school's programs in achieving goals. Year-end evaluations should be seen as analogous to summative evaluations. Their primary purpose is to help decision-makers draw conclusions and make judgements on the efficacy of a school's improvement effort or of a student's educational plan.

(4) An accountability system based upon the "rate" of improvement not comparative performance in relation to demographically different schools.

These prototypes were designed to meet both the letter and intent of the Abbott regulations regarding rewards and sanctions. Specifically, the sample policies support continuous improvement in academic performance by triggering rewards and sanctions based upon the pace of improvement.

When reviewing the materials the reader will see, consistent with the court opinion, high expectations for student performance. An Abbott accountability system must contain rewards for schools that demonstrate noteworthy improvement as well as meaningful sanctions for those schools that don't.

^{iv} The "three-part governance structure," (figure 1) provided in these materials was adapted from the work of Georgia's "League of Professional Schools" and discussed by Carl Glickman in the book, Renewing America's Schools: A Guide for School Based Action. Jossey-Bass, 1993.

^v We elected to provide only elementary and secondary prototypes. In our view a large Middle Level School could easily adapt the Secondary Prototype to fit their needs. A smaller Middle Level School would probably prefer to adapt the elementary prototype.

^{vi} Specifically the level #3 report will indicate the degree of faithful implementation of each component of the model program that was adopted by the school (as identified by the developer).

^{vii} Ibid.