



Missouri's School Accountability System

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Volume 4, Issue 7
January 2023



PRIME CENTER
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

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Key Points

In this policy brief, we describe Missouri's current accountability system for traditional public and public charter schools—Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) 6—and how it differs from the prior version known as MSIP 5. We add context by detailing federal school accountability system requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which also impacts the work of schools in Missouri. We find:

1. ESSA largely places the responsibility of designing school accountability systems on individual states, meaning states have significant influence over the standards LEAs and schools are held to and, thereby, the education available to students.
2. The emphasis on performance components, such as academic achievement status and growth, decreases in MSIP 6 (from 100% to 70%) with the addition of the continuous improvement component (30%).
3. The continuous improvement component (30%) focuses on inputs like continuous improvement plans, additional student readiness indicators, student attendance, and reflections on progress towards meeting goals, administering and analyzing the results of a culture and climate survey, as well as timely submission of numerous required documents and data points.
4. In MSIP 6, achievement status and growth are considered independent and equal—each component accounts for 24% of the total score, totaling 48% overall.
5. Missouri has made strides in revising its school accountability system, particularly by separating and strengthening the importance of academic status and growth. However, these performance outcomes, which demonstrate students' comprehension and learning of key subject areas, account for less than half (48%) of an LEA's performance rating.



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Introduction

School accountability systems are a set of policies and practices used by states to evaluate and hold local education agencies (LEAs)^a and schools responsible for the academic performance of their students.¹ Often associated with test-based accountability, multiple indicators are included in these systems to spotlight areas of school quality and prompt support.² School accountability systems are intended to quantify schools' effectiveness, communicate such effectiveness to stakeholders, and outline the resulting actions based on student performance such as recognition, resources, or intervention.³ In this policy brief, we describe Missouri's current accountability system for traditional public and public charter schools—Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) 6—and how it differs from the prior version known as MSIP 5. We add context by detailing federal school accountability system requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which also impacts the work of schools in Missouri. Finally, we conclude by assessing the composition of Missouri's current school accountability system, highlighting the characteristics that are likely to foster school improvement as well as those that might be less helpful.

States are the entities primarily responsible for the maintenance and operation of public schools, as outlined in state constitutions. States implement school accountability systems to monitor how schools are operating and determine the educational impact they are having on students. This supervision, and associated requirements, often lead the term “school accountability” to have negative connotations. Yet, the theoretical goals of school accountability are intended to be positive. The overarching goal of school accountability systems is to ensure high-quality public education is available for all students, particularly those who may be disadvantaged or high-need. The best school accountability systems tell educators and parents around the state what matters for students and provide clear, concise feedback as to how students are doing against the standards so they can improve. In addition, earlier research suggests school accountability systems can have positive impacts on student performance.^{4,5,6} At their best, effective school accountability systems are one tool to help ensure we are providing adequate and equitable educational opportunities for students across the state.

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^a For the purposes of this brief, the term “school” represents an attendance center with a building code; the terms “district,” “LEA,” and “charter” are interchangeable and hold county-district codes.

School Accountability Systems and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—the nation’s current federal K-12 education law—requires states to develop and implement a school accountability system to receive federal grants, most notably Title 1 which supports students from low-income households. Under ESSA, states are required to include five components of school performance as part of their school accountability systems (Table 1).

Table 1 : ESSA Required Indicators for School Accountability Systems

Component	Metrics/Data Collected
Academic Achievement (Status)	Academic achievement on state standardized tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and math in grades 3-8 and one grade in high school, and in three grades in science.
Academic Achievement (Growth)	Academic growth in reading and math based on state tests. Required for elementary and middle schools; optional for high schools.
Graduation Rates	High school four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates.
English Language Proficiency	Progress of English language learners (ELL) towards proficiency.
School Quality or Student Success	At least one non-academic measure of school quality or student success such as school climate and safety, student or educator engagement, access to advanced coursework, college and career readiness, chronic absenteeism, discipline referrals, and/or dropout rates.

All schools must receive a performance rating based on the required indicators. States have flexibility in determining the type of rating system they choose and how much importance they place on each indicator; however, academic indicators must be given “substantial weight” over non-academic indicators.⁷ ESSA requires states to report on the success of both the school as a whole and specific subgroups of students and communicate school performance through an online “State Report Card.”⁸ Schools in need of improvement must be identified for comprehensive or targeted support, and LEAs are required to develop and implement strategies to improve academic achievement accordingly.⁹ Overall, ESSA largely places the responsibility of designing school accountability systems on individual states, meaning states have significant influence over the standards LEAs and schools are held to and, thereby, the education available to students. This is a notable change from the earlier version of the federal education law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which was more prescriptive in defining the accountability rules and regulations that were to be used within states.

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Missouri's School Accountability System has Evolved to Separate and Strengthen Academic Growth and Include Continuous Improvement Metrics

Since 1991, Missouri has utilized the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP) to hold LEAs and schools accountable and meet federal requirements. In this section, we detail the current accountability system, MSIP 6, which took hold in 2022, and highlight key changes from the previous version (MSIP 5). Notably, this iteration of Missouri's school accountability system adds continuous improvement as a new area of focus. This requires LEAs and schools to develop strategic plans for student success and analyze current practices utilizing data and stakeholder feedback.

The performance metrics (Table 2), which account for 70% of an LEA's rating, focus on student outcomes such as standardized test status and growth, graduation rates, postsecondary placements, and other student readiness indicators. The continuous improvement metrics (Table 3), which account for the remaining 30% of an LEA's rating, focus on inputs like continuous improvement plans, additional student readiness indicators, student attendance, reflections on progress towards meeting goals, administering and analyzing the results of a culture and climate survey, and timely submission of numerous required documents and data points.

The performance metrics (Table 2), which account for 70% of an LEA's rating, focus on student outcomes such as standardized test status and growth, graduation rates, postsecondary placements, and other student readiness indicators.



Table 2 : Missouri School Accountability Plan Performance Components

Performance Components	Metrics/Data Collected	Percentage of Overall Performance Score
Academic Achievement (Status)	Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Scores (grades 3-8) in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. End-of-Course Assessments (high school) in English II, Algebra I, Biology, and Government.	24%
Academic Achievement (Growth)	Comparative MAP Assessment Scores based on the Missouri Growth Model in ELA and Math.	24%
High School Graduation Rate	The highest high school graduation rate among either the four, five, six, or seven year adjusted cohort rate.	10%
Graduate Follow Up	The fraction of high school graduates in one of the following postsecondary placements: employment, higher education (college enrollment or trade/technical school), and military service.	2%
Success Ready Students	Can be measured by a variety of indicators related to one of the following: high school readiness, CCR Assessment (ACT, SAT, WorkKeys, ACCUPLACER, and ASVAB), Advanced Coursework (AP, IB, PLTW, or DESE-approved Industry Recognized Credentials, stackable credentials, dual credit, or dual enrollment).	10%
Total		70%

Source: MSIP 6 Comprehensive Guide

Academic achievement measures (status and growth) utilize results from the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). Status is measured by a three-year average of the MAP Performance Index (MPI)—a metric that represents the overall or subgroup point-in-time test scores at an LEA or school. In MSIP 6, the performance level index scores used to calculate MPI scores are continuous (ranging from 1-5), whereas previously scores were discrete (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5). This change allows for LEAs or schools to earn a range of scores for each student at a particular performance level. Growth is measured using the Missouri Growth Model, which provides growth scores for students in grades four through eight in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. This model calculates growth scores schoolwide and for a subgroup of students based on three consecutive years of MAP scores, and describes how much students are growing from year to year. For more information on the Missouri Growth Model and PRiME’s stance on student growth, see the PRiME 2022 Missouri Statewide Student Growth Report.

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The emphasis on the performance metrics of status and growth decreases in MSIP 6 (from 100% to 70%) with the addition of the continuous improvement components (30%). In addition, a change in performance calculation reinforces the importance of student growth. In MSIP 6, achievement status and growth are considered independent and equal—each component accounts for 24% of the total score, totaling 48% overall. Previously, academic status and growth were combined under one component, which practically served to de-emphasize growth relative to status. This shift highlights the importance of student growth; LEAs and schools cannot control the status of students when entering a school, but they should be held accountable for the growth that occurs.

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Additionally, a stronger emphasis is placed upon individual student preparation and welfare. “Success-Ready Students” is a new category in both the performance and continuous improvement indicators. In the performance component, this indicator is composed of data from various college and workforce readiness exams, workforce credentials, and advanced coursework. The continuous improvement Success-Ready Students indicator focuses on attendance rates for all students, schools administering kindergarten readiness exams and ensuring that each eighth grade cohort member has an Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP) prior to entering their freshman year.

In MSIP 6, achievement status and growth are considered independent and equal—each component accounts for 24% of the total score, totaling 48% overall. This shift highlights the importance of student growth.



Table 3 : Missouri School Accountability Plan Continuous Improvement Components

Continuous Improvement Components	Metrics/Data Collected	Percentage of Overall Performance
Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP)	A plan that focuses on continuous improvement in the following areas: effective teaching and learning, data-based decision making, and equity and access.	15%
Climate and Culture Survey	A stakeholder survey demonstrating student voices are being heard and respected, positive classroom learning environments are address, and periodic reports are provided to stakeholders.	2%
Response to Standards	A narrative describing the school community which reflects on progress towards meeting goals and highlights strengths.	4%
Required Documentation	Annual audit report, annual Secretary of the Board Report, and MOSIS/Core Data Collection.	3%
Success Ready Students	School entry readiness (Kindergarten cohort), regular attendance (K-12), and Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP) (8th grade cohort).	6%
Total		30%

Source: MSIP 6 Comprehensive Guide

The bulk of the continuous improvement indicators, the Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP), provides LEAs the opportunities to explain their logic model, theory of action, and/or strategic planning around improving outcomes for their educational community. The CSIP focuses on three areas of educational inputs: effective teaching and learning, data based decision making, and equity and access. Outlining these three areas provides LEAs the opportunity to demonstrate why and how they design and implement their plans for continuous improvement.

Other components in the continuous improvement section include a Culture and Climate Survey and a Response to Standards. The Culture and Climate Survey indicator requires LEAs to administer surveys that demonstrate student voices are being heard, ask questions about the classroom learning environment, and provide periodic, public reports on the findings of the surveys. LEAs may administer a locally developed survey, purchase a vendor survey, or use the survey provided by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to address the three areas of focus. The Response to Standards indicator asks LEAs to reflect on both the inputs and outcomes in their educational environments as they progress towards meeting their educational goals, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

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MSIP 6 Annual Performance Review (APR) Score and LEA Accreditation

The scores earned in the performance and continuous improvement areas of MSIP 6 are used to generate the Annual Performance Review (APR) for each LEA.^b Schools also receive an APR which focuses on fewer components—academic achievement, success-readiness, follow-up, and graduation—as compared to LEAs.¹⁰ Importantly, only the LEA APR is used to determine accreditation. According to DESE’s implementation timeline, APR scores will be available for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. However, LEAs will not be recommended for accreditation status based on the MSIP 6 APR until the 2023-24 school year.¹¹ At that time, DESE will recommend accreditation status to the Missouri State Board of Education for LEAs in the following categories: Accredited with Distinction (>95%), Accredited (94.9% to 70%), Provisionally Accredited (69.9% to 50%), and Unaccredited (<50%).^c

Is Missouri’s School Accountability System Measuring What Matters?

Missouri’s school accountability system, MSIP 6, provides multiple opportunities for LEAs to demonstrate success, with the largest portion of the system resting on student academic performance (status and growth) measured by standardized assessments. Missouri has made strides in revising its school accountability system, particularly by separating and strengthening the importance of academic status and growth. However, these performance outcomes, which demonstrate students’ comprehension and learning of key subject areas, account for less than half (48%) of an LEA’s performance rating. With Missouri’s student academic outcomes below the national average and persistent achievement gaps based on race and income,¹² we raise the question—is Missouri’s school accountability system measuring what matters?

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^b In Missouri, LEA-level APRs are generated for LEAs, districts, and charters, and building-level APRs are generated for schools.

^c For more details on score calculation for each of the indicators, APR scores, and LEA accreditation, see the [MSIP 6 Comprehensive Guide](#).

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