PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Best Practices and Indicators

Goals and Measurable Objectives

1. **The district has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives that can be achieved within budget for each major educational and operational program. These major programs are**
   - **Basic Education (K-3, 4-8, 9-12), Exceptional Student Education, Vocational/Technical Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages Education, Facilities Construction, Facilities Maintenance, Transportation, Food Services, and Safety and Security. [1]**

   a. The district can demonstrate that it has clearly stated goals and objectives for these programs.

   b. Program goals and objectives reflect the primary purposes of each program and are consistent with the district's strategic plan.

   c. For each program, the district has an accountability system for routinely measuring its progress towards meeting its goals and objectives.

   d. Program-level accountability systems include policy level outcomes the board and public can use to assess performance as well as lower-level interim outcome and process measures managers can use to monitor program progress. [2]

   e. Program-level accountability systems include linked input, output, process, interim outcome, and outcome measures.

   f. Program-level objectives are designed to be able to be achieved within existing resources.

   g. The district establishes performance standards indicating the progress it would like to achieve in meeting its objectives during the time frames covered by its budget or strategic plan.

   h. The district compares its performance to appropriate benchmarks, which may be its past performance or, when data is available, the performance of comparable districts, or industry standards. [3]

   i. The district regularly tracks and uses performance information to make management decisions. These could be decisions to maintain the status quo, make budget adjustments, adopt new strategies, streamline operations, outsource program services, or deprivatize already outsourced services.

   j. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

2. **The district formally evaluates the performance and cost of its major educational and operational programs and uses evaluation results to improve program performance and cost-efficiency.**

   a. The district periodically conducts evaluations of its educational and operational programs, functions, or activities using performance information and other reasonable criteria. 4

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[1] Each district should define those programs considered "major" within these two broad areas. At a minimum, they should include the programs listed. However, the district should have some defensible, logical criteria to identify major educational and operational programs. Criteria may include funding, number of children or full-time equivalents (FTEs) served, or state or federal requirements.

[2] The number of measures for each level should be limited to no more than 10 or 12.

[3] "Benchmarking" is comparing the actual performance and cost of major programs and services to acceptable standards, including the performance of other organizations, to identify differences and opportunities for improvement. Benchmarks should include comparisons to other school districts, government agencies, and private industry that provide the same or similar services; include comparisons to best-in-class organizations (models), best practices, and generally accepted industry standards; clearly define acceptable performance targets/standards (in the top 10 school districts, in the middle of peer districts, within 10% of the industry average, etc.) to assess whether performance and cost expectations have been met; be easy to understand and make sense; show a clear relationship to critical outcomes; be based on reliable and comparable data; be used to identify reasons for differences in performance or costs and to make improvements; and be developed at the same time as goals and objectives and updated annually.

[4] Formal program evaluation is more comprehensive and generally less frequent than assessments. Formal program evaluations focus on program results and effectiveness, are independently conducted, and examine broad issues such as program structure and administration and whether the program is meeting its intended purpose.

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b. At a minimum, the district's evaluations examine whether the program or activity is meeting its goals and objectives in a cost-effective manner.

c. The district issues evaluation reports that include findings and recommendations to improve the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the program or activity being evaluated.

d. The findings and recommendations of the district's evaluation reports are clearly and directly stated, understandable, and do not require undue assistance to interpret their meaning or significance.

e. The district provides evaluation reports to school board members and top-level administrators.

f. The district can demonstrate specifically how it uses evaluation results to improve performance and cost-efficiency.

g. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

3. **The district clearly reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers.**

a. The district periodically reports its progress toward meeting the objectives of its major programs to the board and superintendent.

b. The district reports its progress toward meeting the goals of its major educational programs and, if considered necessary, its other programs, to school advisory councils, parents, and other taxpayers in a manner that is clear and understandable and does not require undue assistance to interpret its meaning or significance.

c. The district's progress reports include disaggregated student performance information for special groups of students (e.g., ESE, ESOL, or at-risk students).

d. The district has established a mechanism to receive and respond to feedback from parents and other taxpayers as an avenue of accountability to improve poor performance and inefficiency.

e. Other information that demonstrated the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.