



Course-Based Accountability Indicator Small Group Feedback

From mid-April to mid-June, a small group of partners met with MDE staff to explore and provide feedback on options for three indicators to be added to Minnesota's North Star school and district accountability system under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This feedback will be shared with a larger group of partners for final thoughts and questions, all of which will then be used by MDE leaders to draft an amendment to Minnesota's ESSA state plan to create these indicators.

That draft amendment will be posted for public comment. After public comment, the amendment (potentially revised to reflect the public comment) will be sent to the U.S. Department of Education for review.

Well-Rounded Education

Conversations on this indicator featured some of the widest-ranging perspectives among group members.

Elementary school

Preferences for how to calculate well-rounded education at the elementary school level included:

- The percentage of students taking courses in at least 5 or 6 subject areas.
- The average number of subject areas taken by students in a given year.
- The percentage of time spent outside of math and English/language arts.
- The number and percentage of students participating in courses fulfilling the content areas required by law, including 2 arts courses, and any content area instruction beyond that (e.g. world language, computer programming, etc.)

Middle school

Preferences for how to calculate well-rounded education at the middle school level included:

- The percentage of students taking courses in at least 6 subject areas.
- The average number of subject areas taken during students' total time at the middle school.
- The average number of subject areas taken by students in a given year.
- The number and percentage of students participating in courses fulfilling the content areas required by law, including 2 arts courses, and any content area instruction beyond that (e.g. world language, computer programming, etc.)
- The percentage of students earning credit in at least one perspective-expanding course (e.g. career exploration/pathways, internships, project-based learning courses, etc.)

High school

Preferences for how to calculate well-rounded education at the high school level included:

- The average number of courses taken beyond state graduation requirements.
- The percentage of students earning credit in at least one perspective-expanding course (e.g. career exploration/pathways, internships, project-based learning courses, etc.)
- The percentage of students in 10th grade receiving credit in at least 1 or 2 subject areas beyond those required for graduation, considering both 9th and 10th grade courses.
- The percentage of students in 12th grade receiving credit in at least X number of subject areas over their time at the school.
- The percentage of students receiving credit in 5 or more subject areas.

Additional considerations

Some group members favor treating the rigorous and applied high school coursework indicator as the well-rounded high school indicator.

One group member recommended an entirely different approach to calculation that emphasizes access to guidance counselors, nurses, and other aspects of a whole-child approach to education.

Ninth Grade Course Completion

Group members were in closer agreement on this topic, with general agreement that calculation of this indicator should focus on the percentage of students receiving credit in all courses taken, although there is some variation in preferences for whether this calculation should focus on all courses within a core set of subject areas or the complete set of courses students take.

Courses to include

Most group members preferred focusing this indicator on either four “core” subject areas—English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—or an expanded set of subject areas that adds arts, health, and physical education.

Additional considerations

The attention to a set of core courses here comes from research on this topic which has tended to emphasize the four core subject areas because they are the most common across schools in all states.

Rigorous and Applied High School Coursework

This indicator is an area of moderate agreement between group members. While this indicator is currently described in Minnesota’s ESSA state plan as being for “rigorous” high school coursework, many group members

supported a more expansive name to reflect the types of courses and experiences included. For this document's purpose, one group member's suggestion of "rigorous and applied" has been used.

Defining "rigorous and applied"

Most group members prefer this indicator calculate the percentage of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses, taking International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme courses, participating in dual or concurrent enrollment programs (including post-secondary enrollment options [PSEO] with the student attending an outside institution of higher education as well as options where the student takes college-level courses from one of their high school teachers through College in the Schools or similar programs), and/or achieving career and technical education (CTE) concentrator status by taking a minimum number of course hours in a single field of CTE.

One group member also recommended including additional courses and experiences beyond those listed here. Those recommendations include:

- Other rigorous courses (those flagged as accelerated and other courses known to be accelerated/beyond high school graduation requirements)
- Other applied courses (those flagged as project-based, thesis/senior seminar, or courses otherwise known to give students experiential, applied, or hands-on experiences that help prepare them for real-world problem solving)

Calculation structure

Most group members were comfortable with basing this calculation on the percentage of 11th and 12th grade students taking such courses in a given year.

Some either preferred or were also comfortable with using the percentage of all students taking such courses in a given year.

One was also open to the percentage of 12th graders taking such courses at any point during their time at the high school, while acknowledging it as a backup option that would result in a smaller number of students able to be included in the calculation.

Additional considerations

As noted under the well-rounded education indicator, some group members supported combining this indicator with the high school level well-rounded education indicator.

Use in the Identification Process

These new indicators will be added to the current multi-stage North Star accountability system. Under the terms of ESSA, these indicators must play less of a role in decision making than the indicators of academic achievement, academic progress, progress toward English language proficiency, and graduation. How much of a

role they play in decision making relative to consistent attendance (the remaining indicator in the North Star system, currently used at the end of the process to distinguish between schools below thresholds on the other indicators) was an area of general agreement among most group members with a preference.

Placement relative to consistent attendance

Most group members either (a) preferred keeping consistent attendance as the final indicator in the identification process or (b) expressed no preference on the relative placement of the new indicators relative to consistent attendance.

Regarding the relative impact of consistent attendance or the new indicators on identification, most group members either (a) recommended consistent attendance have more decision-making power or (b) expressed no preference.

One group member recommended conversations with school support staff to get further perspective on this topic.