



State and Local Report Cards

Prepared by: Emily Hicks, Staff Attorney

This issue brief provides a general overview of the information required by federal and state law to be published annually regarding state, district, and school performance and progress.

FEDERAL LAW: THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is the primary federal law governing K-12 education in the United States. In 2015, Congress reauthorized ESEA through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under ESSA, states are required to publish annual “report cards” demonstrating academic achievement and progress at both the state and local levels. State and local report cards are required to be concise, available online, and accessible to all parents, including parents with disabilities and limited English proficiency. Additionally, states must ensure that state and local report cards do not reveal personally identifiable information about individual students.¹

Information Required on State Report Cards

ESSA requires that state report cards include all of the following information:²

- A description of, and results from, the State accountability system.
- Information on the usage of school improvement funds under ESEA section 1003.
- The number and percentage of English learners in the state achieving English language proficiency.
- Information on the progress of students toward meeting the State-designed long-term goals and measurements of interim progress.
- Information collected and reported in compliance with the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).
- Information on educator qualifications.
- Information on per-pupil expenditures.
- Number and percentage of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take an alternative assessment.
- Results at grades 4 and 8 on the reading and mathematics National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Information on postsecondary enrollment by students in the school or district.

State report cards are also required to include the following information in a manner that can be cross-tabulated by each major racial and ethnic student subgroup, gender, English proficiency status, and disability status:

- Student achievement on the required reading/language arts, mathematics, and science assessments.
- Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates.
- Students assessed and not assessed on the required assessments.

Information Required on Local Report Cards

Under ESSA, local report cards are required to include the same information required on the state report card, but on the district and school levels. Additionally, district report cards must compare student achievement on state tests in the district or school to student achievement in the state as a whole.³

WISCONSIN ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CARDS

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) publishes Wisconsin's Accountability Report Cards, which fulfill the ESSA requirement that every state annually publish state and local report cards. State law requires that DPI annually publish a school district and school report card for every school district and every public school, independent charter school, and private school participating in the statewide or Milwaukee Parental Choice program.⁴ Under state law, both school and school district report cards are required to include: (1) measures of school performance or district improvement; (2) an assigned "performance category"; and (3) program participation data for districts and high schools.

State statutes require that certain measures of school performance or district improvement be included on school and district report cards; these include measures of closing gaps between students of different subgroups, rates of attendance and high school graduation, and measures of student achievement and growth in student achievement. All four measures must be categorized by the following student subgroups: English language proficiency, disability, income level, and race or ethnicity. Both the student achievement measure and the growth in student achievement measure are required to be weighted to account for the impact of poverty on student achievement.⁵

For high schools and school districts, DPI must include on the school or district report card information on participation in certain programs. Specifically, the report card must include the number and percentage of students participating in the Early College Credit program under s. 118.55, Stats., and in a youth apprenticeship under s. 106.13, Stats. Additionally, the report cards are required to include information on student participation in community service, advanced placement courses, technical college education programs, and the fine arts.⁶

As part of each school and district's report card, DPI is required to assign each school or district a performance category based on the school or district's level of performance or improvement in the four measures. There are five performance categories: "Significantly Exceeds Expectations," "Exceeds Expectations," "Meets Expectations," "Meets Few Expectations," and "Fails to Meet Expectations."⁷

For private schools participating in either the statewide parental choice program under s. 118.60, Stats., or the Milwaukee Parental Choice program under s. 119.23, Stats., DPI is required to include additional information on the school's report card. This includes the percentage of students attending the private school under the program, a performance rating based on the achievement data of the pupils attending the private school under the program and, if all pupils in the school are assessed, a second performance rating based on the achievement data of all of the pupils that attend the private school.⁸

An in depth explanation of the different components of Wisconsin Accountability Report Cards is available at: https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/accountability/pdf/Report_Card_Guide_-_2018-19_Final_10_04_19.pdf.

¹ [20 U.S.C.s. 6311 \(h\)\(1\)\(B\)\(iii\)](#).

² [20 U.S.C. ss. 6303](#) and [6311 \(h\)\(1\)\(C\)](#).

³ [20 U.S.C.s. 6311 \(h\)\(2\)\(C\)](#).

⁴ [ss. 115.385 \(1\)](#) and [\(2\)](#), Stats.

⁵ [ss. 115.385 \(1\) \(a\)](#) and [\(1g\)\(c\)](#), Stats.

⁶ [s. 115.385 \(1\) \(d\)](#), Stats.

⁷ [s. 115.385 \(1\) \(b\)](#), Stats.

⁸ [s. 115.385 \(3\)](#), Stats.