



Weston Public Schools
Office of the Assistant Superintendent
Kenneth G. Craw, Ed.D.

MEMORANDUM

To: William S. McKersie, Ph.D., Superintendent
Date: February 5, 2020
Subject: Release of Next Generation Accountability Reports

As you know, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) recently released its Next Generation Accountability Reports for the 2018-19 school year. This system is intended to measure school and district progress across the state in preparing students for success in college and careers. There are 12 indicators, as well as sub-indicators, that contribute to an overall accountability index score for each school and district. More than half of the index score is based on academic achievement results as measured by the state accountability tests in ELA, math and science. Additional indicators included in the reports focus on absenteeism, graduation rates, physical fitness, and arts access. (See attached document from the CT State Department of Education explaining the indicators.)

Accountability Index Scores

Overall, WPS received 85.4% of the possible points for the 2018-19 school year. This is a very strong result when compared to the rest of the state (74.2%) and DRG A (85.7%). **It should be noted that Weston High School had the highest index score (98.1 %) of all high schools in the state.**

The data below reflects our ranking out of the DRG A districts that had the same number of max points (1350). Easton (K-8), Redding (K-8), and Region 9 (9-12) are not included in this table in order to make a valid comparison between K-12 districts.

DRG A Districts Accountability Index Comparison		
District	2018-19	2017-18
DRG A Average	85.7	85.7
Darien	89.1	88.0
New Canaan	88.4	88.4
Ridgefield	86.3	82.3
Weston	85.4	86.5
Westport	85.1	83.8
Wilton	85.0	85.2

Performance Index Highlights by School:

School	Successes	Area of Growth
WHS 98.1	<p>Highest index score (98.1) of any high school in the state.</p> <p>Recognized School of Distinction.</p> <p>Index/Rate in Physical Fitness has increased from 52.4% (2017) to 70.7% (2018) to 83.1% (2019)</p> <p>4-year graduation rate was 98.5 %.</p> <p>All participation rates above 95%.</p>	<p>Absentee rate for <i>high needs</i> subgroup is double that of all students.</p>
WMS 76.1	<p>All participation rates above 95%.</p>	<p>WMS index score over the past 4 years has been at or close to the state average.</p> <p>The achievement gap between <i>non-high needs</i> and <i>high needs</i> students was greater than the State gap for both ELA and Math for the second year in a row.</p> <p>Index/Rate in Physical Fitness has dropped from 68.9% (2018) to 63.2% (2019).</p>
WIS 85.0	<p>WIS had a very strong overall index score of 84.9.</p> <p>All participation rates above 95%.</p>	<p>In science, there was a slight performance index gap.</p>
HES	<p>As a K-2 school, there are no tested grades at HES. Absenteeism rates are the only indicators contributing to its index rate.</p>	<p>There seems to be an error with the data reporting for chronic absenteeism. District is looking into this anomaly.</p>

Participation Rates

Overall, Weston’s participation rates in all tested grades were above 95% in 2019 for the state accountability tests. The CSDE requires at least a 95% participation rate for students in all tested subjects for *all students* and for the *high needs* subgroup. The *high needs* subgroup is defined as any student classified under special education, English Language Learner (ELL), or free/reduced lunch. Weston achieved the 95% standard for *all students* as well as the *high needs* subgroup. This was the result of a high level of coordination between central office and the building level administrators.

Note: Our *high needs* subgroups consist of a small group of students; consequently, if a small number of *high needs* students do not sit for the exam, then our numbers will fall below 95%.

For example, if there are 20 students in a subgroup and two students do not take the exam, then our participation rate would be at 90% falling below the expected rate.

We know that there are some families in our district who are adamant that they will not have their child take the state accountability assessments, so this presents a challenge for the WPS administrators in ensuring that we meet expected participation levels. Any lack of full student participation would have a negative effect on Weston’s rankings.

School Classifications

The CSDE classifies schools from *Level 1* (highest) to *Level 5* (lowest) based on their accountability index points earned. It also takes into account any participation rates that fell below the 95% threshold and any achievement gaps between *non-high needs* and the *high needs* subgroup. The way it works is that the school classification is initially based on the accountability index score, but then lowered one category if any one or more of the following three conditions are met:

- Outlier Gap in ELA, Math or Science;
- Outlier Gap in 6-Year Graduation Rate;
- Participation below 95% in any tested subject for *all students* or *high needs*.

The classifications for WIS and WMS were lowered by one category as a result of triggering one of the above conditions. The table below lists the classifications for the previous two school years. Highlighted in yellow is the factor that lowered the school classification for each school. At WIS, the participation rate for the *high needs* subgroup in science lowered the result, while at WMS there were performance gaps between *non-high needs* and the *high needs* subgroup for both ELA and math. HES does not receive a classification since it is does not have any tested grades.

Next Generation Accountability Reports School Classifications				
School Classification	HES	WIS	WMS	WHS
2016-17 Classification	NA	2	3	2
2017-18 Classification	NA	2	3	2
2018-19 Classification	NA	2	3	1
2018-19 Accountability Index Points	NA	722	685	1030
Max Index Points	NA	850	900	1050
Accountability Index Value	NA	85.0	76.1	98.1
Category 1 (accountability index values)	NA	85-100	85-100	85-100
Category 2 (accountability index values)	NA	70-84.9	70-84.9	70-84.9
Category 3 (accountability index values)	NA	0 – 69.9	0 – 69.9	0 – 69.9
Outlier Gap in ELA, Math or Science	NA	Science	ELA & Math	No
Outlier Graduation Rate Gap (based on 6-year graduation rate)	NA	NA	NA	No
Participation below 95% in any subject for all students or high needs students	NA	None	None	None

Achievement Gaps

The CSDE compares the performance of the *high-needs* subgroup with the rest of the cohort (*non-high needs*) for each of the tested subjects. When the size of the gap is greater than the state gap, which is defined as the mean plus one standard deviation, this gets noted on the district's accountability report.

The table below compares the index gaps for ELA, math and science for each of the DRG A districts. Highlighted in yellow are the district scores that exceeded the State Gap Mean for each subject area. For Weston, there was a gap in science of 16.9% that exceeded the state gap.

District	ELA Index Gap	Math Index Gap	Science Index Gap
Darien	8.3	8.9	15.5
New Canaan	8.5	9.4	10.4
Region 9	18.1	20.6	16.1
Ridgefield	14.7	18.1	12.3
Weston	12.1	15.1	16.9
Westport	12.	14.9	14.8
Wilton	9.4	14.8	16.4
State Gap Mean +1 Stand. Dev.	15.4	17.6	16.1

Chronic Absenteeism

Another indicator contributing to the accountability index is chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism is defined by the state as being absent for 10% or more of the total enrolled days. The state goal is for districts and schools to have a chronic absenteeism rate less than 5%. The state tracks this data for *all students* and the *high needs* subgroup.

In 2017-18, the overall district rate was 4.6% for all students. The rate increased in Weston as students move from the lower schools to the high school. WHS had the highest level for all students (7.4%). The rate for the *high needs* subgroup at the district level was 9.1%. The rate for the *high needs* subgroup by school was 3% at HES, 8.1% at WIS, 12.2% at WMS and 14.7% at WHS.

For 2018-19, there appears to be a discrepancy at HES with the chronic absenteeism rate that is affecting the overall absenteeism rates. The chronic absenteeism rate at HES for all students is reported as 19.3%, while the *high needs* groups is 25.8%. We are working with the state to correct this perceived error.

College and Career Readiness (CCR)

There are two indicators for College and Career Readiness – one for the participation in challenging coursework and the other is with regard to student performance. WHS received 100% of the points for both of these categories for the second year in a row, which is a testament to the school's rigorous, comprehensive curriculum and the continued high-performance of our students on AP, SAT and ACT assessments.

CCR Courses: WHS had an outstanding result of 99% of students taking CCR courses. The state target is for 75% of high school students to participate in at least one of the following in grades 11 or 12:

- 2 AP courses or,
- 2 courses in one of 17 Career & Technical Education (CTE) categories or,
- 2 workplace experience “courses” in any area.

CCR Exams: Similarly, WHS had a strong result of 86.2% of students who met at least one of the benchmarks below. The state target is for 75% of students who participate in grades 11 and 12 achieving the CCR benchmark on at least one of the following:

- SAT (EBRW=480 and Math=530)
- ACT (Meeting benchmark on 3 of 4 exams- benchmark varies by exam.)
- AP (3 or higher on an AP exam.)

Summary

There are several indicators signaling that our district and schools are performing at high levels. The district’s graduation rates and CCR results are a testament to the collective efforts of our pre-K to 12 faculty and staff in delivering high-quality programs and services to support high levels of student achievement. Student performance on state accountability assessments and CCR exams indicates that students are achieving high standards at both WIS and WHS. However, student performance at WMS is lagging behind in ELA and math.

Based on this report, there are two areas that have emerged as areas of focus to inform our continuous improvement efforts.

1. ELA and math academic growth and performance indicators at WMS are in need of improvement.
2. There is an achievement gap between *non-high needs* students and the *high-needs* subgroup, particularly at WMS. Our investment in reading and math intervention as part of the proposed FY21 budget seeks to provide an improved structure to identify and support students in need of remediation.