



Survey Overview

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) collected public feedback on the development of the state’s plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) through online surveys during January 2017. Accountability-related questions were asked in a “general” survey that did not require prior knowledge and covered multiple topics and a “specific” survey limited to one topic for those who had more background on the plans (i.e., viewed a video or attended a feedback forum). This report provides the results of both surveys, as analyzed by Public Policy Associates, Inc.¹

For more information about the Action Teams and the feedback opportunities, please see [MDE’s ESSA web page](#).

Respondents

People from across the state responded to the surveys, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.² People from a variety of sectors responded to both surveys. However, educators predominated in both surveys, with 81% of respondents to the Accountability-specific survey reporting as educators.

Note that the general survey had far more respondents and, therefore, those results should be considered more representative of public opinion. The fact that most respondents were educators should also be considered when applying the survey findings in decision-making.

¹ MDE created and fielded the surveys.

² PPA coded the counties of respondents into the five regions used by the MDE Office of Field Services. Region 1 includes the Upper Peninsula and upper Lower Peninsula; Region 2 includes lower West Michigan; Region 3 includes the mid-section from the Thumb area to Mason and Oceana counties; Region 4 includes Ingham, Saginaw, Washtenaw, and other neighboring counties; and Region 5 is made up of Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland counties. The regional map can be found [here](#).

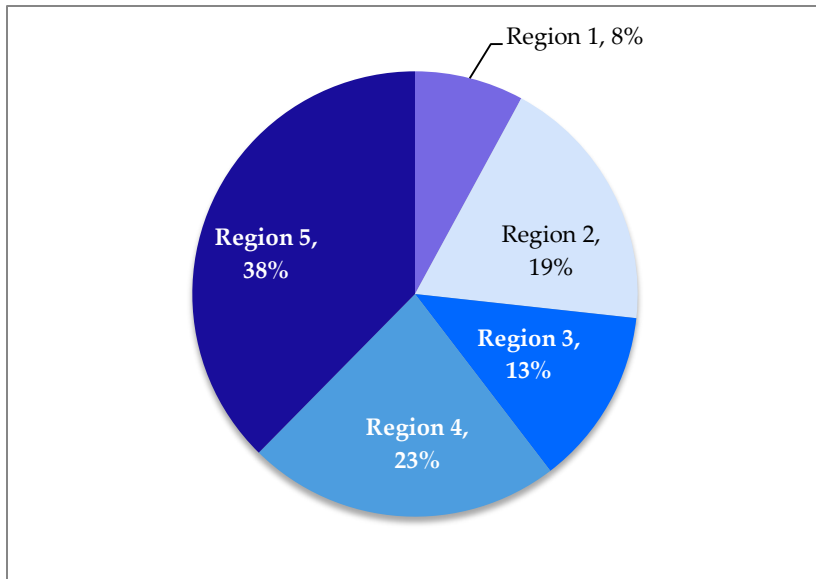


Figure 1. General Survey Respondents by Region (N=625)

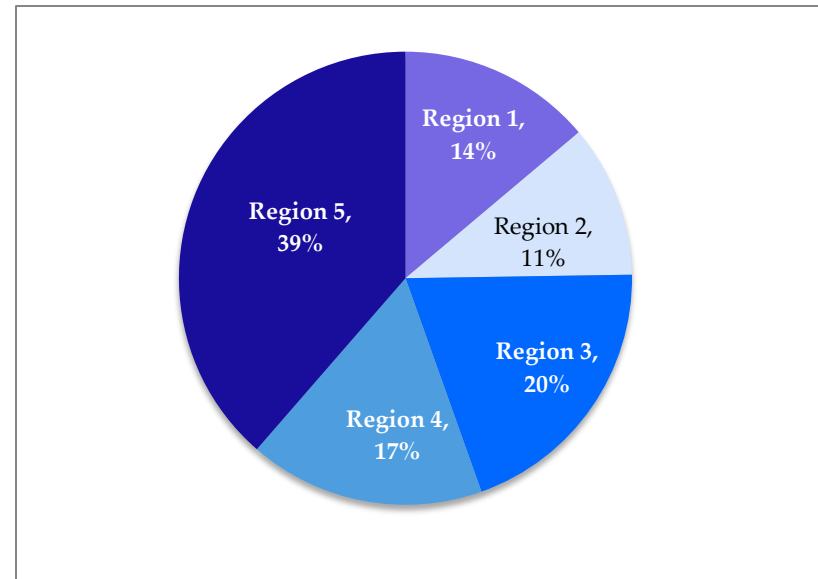


Figure 2. Accountability-Specific Survey Respondents by Region (N=36)

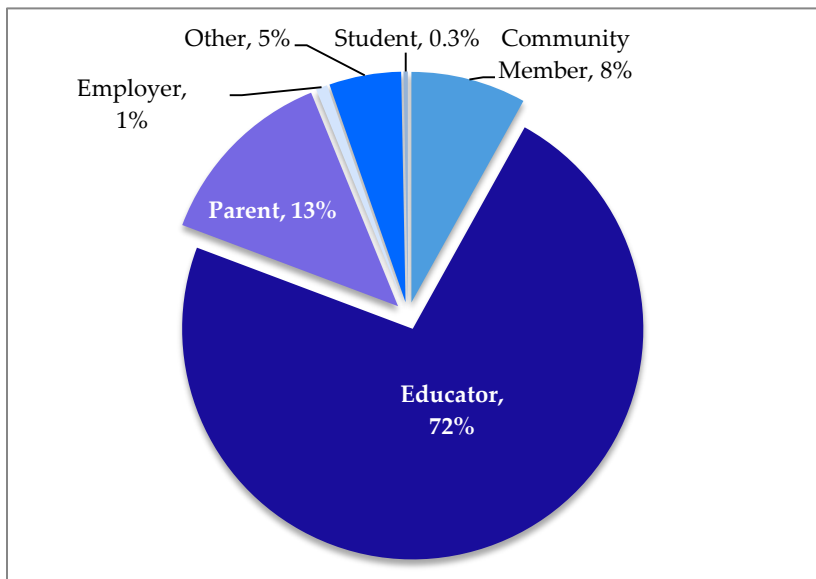


Figure 3. General Survey Respondents by Sector (N=625)

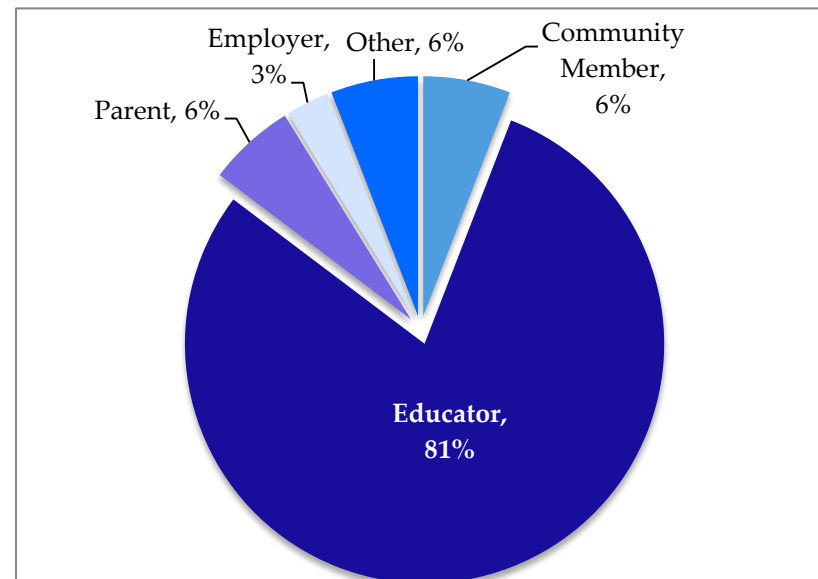


Figure 4. Accountability-Specific Survey Respondents Sector (N=36)






Results

School Ratings and Identification

Forty-eight percent of the general-survey respondents favored using letter grades for schools. However, about a quarter of them said they needed more information about the recommendation. When answers were looked at by the sector of the respondent, parents and community members were the groups most in favor of moving to a letter grade system (58% each) compared to 44% of educators. Respondents' comments conveyed their general view that using letter grades was the most comprehensive approach to reporting on performance, but also indicated that grades were not helpful in improving schools.




The specific-survey takers were against the letter grading of schools. Their comments reflect a concern that such a grading system would further disadvantage schools in low-income communities and that a single-letter grade does not provide enough information to thoroughly understand the quality of a school.

Table 1: School Ratings and Identification (Part 1)*

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>I would need more information</i>
Having A-F letter grades for schools						
General Survey (n=492)		8% (39)	40% (198)	11% (52)	15% (74)	26% (129)
Specific Survey (n=27)		4% (1)	30% (8)	19% (5)	44% (12)	4% (1)
Identifying low-performing schools needing support every three years (rather than every one or two years)						
General Survey (n=492)		29% (142)	48% (236)	10% (49)	7% (37)	6% (28)
Specific Survey (n=27)		26% (7)	56% (15)	4% (1)	7% (2)	7% (2)
Basing school ratings on multiple indicators that have specific weights, guided by ESSA requirements						
Specific Survey (n=27)		7% (2)	59% (16)	22% (6)	4% (1)	7% (2)

*Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. The overall graphics shown include all who indicated any level of agreement (agree to strongly agree).

Table 2: School Ratings and Identification (Part 2)*

Survey Item	Overall	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I would need more information
Having long-term goals with interim checkpoints based on statewide performance anchored to implementation year and aligned to Top 10 in 10 timeline						
Specific Survey (n=27)		19% (5)	44% (12)	11% (3)	4% (1)	22% (6)
Identifying schools with under-performing subgroups every year						
Specific Survey (n=27)		15% (4)	30% (8)	26% (7)	26% (7)	4% (1)
Identifying high-performing schools every year						
Specific Survey (n=27)		22% (6)	26% (7)	26% (7)	14% (4)	11% (3)

*Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding. The overall graphics shown include all who indicated any level of agreement (agree to strongly agree).

The majority of respondents of both surveys were in agreement about identifying low-performing schools every three years. Educators in particular supported this (82%). Respondents were closely divided about whether high-performing schools should be identified annually (48% for, 40% against). Just over 50% of respondents were not supportive of identifying schools with under-performing subgroups annually.





Basing school ratings on multiple, weighted indicators and long-term goals with interim checkpoints was viewed favorably by specific-survey takers. A few were concerned about the balance between the weights (e.g., graduation rate and English learner progress) and what would happen when schools do not have reported data for all measures (e.g., if a subgroup size was too small).

Additional Indicator of School Quality and Success

The majority of the general-survey respondents (72%) were in favor of including teacher/administrator longevity as an important indicator of school quality. Educator longevity was considered an equally favorable indicator across the board, with 60% of educators, and 58% of parents and community members citing it as “important” or “very important.” Student chronic absenteeism and advanced coursework were also seen as important factors by the majority of general-survey respondents. Additional ideas submitted by general-survey respondents showed a mixture of indicators ranging from access of resources to satisfaction surveys from parents and students.

However, the specific-survey takers were opposed to these additional indicators (as a grouping).³ Most specific-survey respondents who provided comments as to why they opposed these indicators as a whole were concerned that the indicators disadvantaged high-poverty schools and those schools without the resources to support advanced coursework or offer the most competitive compensation for educators. Several also questioned whether there was a direct linkage between these indicators and school quality.

Table 3: Additional Indicator of School Quality/Success

Survey Item	Overall*	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I would need more information
Basing school quality/student success component on three indicators: teacher/administrator longevity, student chronic absenteeism, completion and passing of advanced coursework						
Specific Survey (n=27)		7% (2)	22% (6)	30% (8)	26% (7)	15% (4)
Importance of each factor in determining school quality/success						
General Survey	Overall	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	I would need more information
Teacher/administrator longevity (n=493)		31% (151)	41% (201)	19% (92)	7% (37)	2% (12)
Student chronic absenteeism (n=491)		57% (280)	26% (126)	9% (42)	5% (26)	3% (17)
Completion and passing of advanced coursework (n=484)		21% (99)	44% (214)	24% (117)	6% (30)	5% (24)

*The overall graphics shown include all who indicated any level of agreement (agree to strongly agree).


Transparency Dashboard

Just over half of general-survey respondents (54%) opposed including student engagement, educator engagement (57%), or advanced coursework (54%) measures on the dashboard. The majority of general-survey respondents (60%) also opposed including post-secondary readiness indicators on the dashboard. General-survey respondents did support the inclusion of school climate and culture indicators and access/equity indicators, at nearly 70% for each.

³ This result may be due to the fact that the survey required a respondent to agree or disagree with the cluster, rather than individual components as in the general survey.





Overall, the specific-survey respondents were in favor of including all of the dashboard components listed, although there was a strong minority who disliked the idea of each component, except access/equity (27% – 35%). Reasons for disagreement included that the dashboard was too broad, the indicators would reflect negatively on schools with high poverty or other barriers not faced by others, and the downsides of reporting suspensions and other behavioral instances. Nonetheless, the majority (74%) of the respondents indicated their support for a transparency dashboard.

Table 4: Transparency Dashboard

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Overall*</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>I would need more information</i>
Having district-level accountability dashboard for the public						
Specific Survey (n=27)		18% (5)	56% (15)	11% (3)	15% (4)	-









*The overall graphic includes all who indicated any level of agreement (agree to strongly agree).

Table 5: Recommended Indicators for the Dashboard (Part 1)

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Overall*</i>	<i>Agree with Including in Dashboard</i>	<i>Disagree with Including in Dashboard</i>	<i>I would need more information</i>
Student Engagement (dropout rate, student mobility, attendance or absenteeism)				
General Survey (n=625)		46% (285)	54% (340)	NA
Specific Survey (n=26)		61% (16)	35% (9)	4% (1)
Educator Engagement (professional development, appropriate placement of educators, principal effectiveness, teacher effectiveness, teacher attendance, teacher surveys)				
General Survey (n=625)		43% (267)	57% (358)	NA
Specific Survey (n=27)		60% (16)	33% (9)	7% (2)

*The overall graphics include all who indicated any level of agreement (agree to strongly agree).

Table 6: Recommended Indicators for the Dashboard (Part 2)



<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Overall*</i>	<i>Agree with Including in Dashboard</i>	<i>Disagree with Including in Dashboard</i>	<i>I would need more information</i>
School Climate and Culture (student surveys, parent surveys, support roles provided like nurses and media specialists, suspension rates, expulsion rates, physical condition of school, safety)				
General Survey (n=625)		69% (434)	31% (191)	NA
Specific Survey (n=26)		65% (17)	27% (7)	8% (2)
Advanced Coursework (Advanced Placement course completion/testing/passing, career and technical education program completion, dual enrollment course completion, International Baccalaureate completion)				
General Survey (n=625)		46% (290)	54% (335)	NA
Specific Survey (n=27)		63% (17)	33% (9)	4% (1)
Post-Secondary Readiness (remedial enrollment, post-secondary entrance rates, student scores on state tests)				
General Survey (n=625)		40% (252)	60% (373)	NA
Specific Survey (n=27)		66% (18)	30% (8)	4% (1)
Access/Equity (access to technology, arts, physical education; early learning in the public school system; achievement gap indicators within assessment system; club and sports participation)				
General Survey (n=625)		68% (426)	32% (199)	NA
Specific Survey (n=26)		69% (18)	19% (5)	12% (3)

*The overall graphics include all who indicated any level of agreement (agree to strongly agree).

Timelines for Implementation

The majority of specific-survey respondents agreed with the draft timelines for the accountability system and dashboard implementation, although few were entirely confident in these timelines (12% and 15%, respectively).

Table 7: Timelines for Accountability System and Dashboard

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Overall*</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>I would need more information</i>
For Accountability, pilot 2016-17; operational 2017-18						
Specific Survey (n=26)		12% (3)	42% (11)	12% (3)	23% (6)	12% (3)
For Dashboard, development/testing 2016-18; release 2018-19						
Specific Survey (n=26)		15% (4)	58% (15)	4% (1)	12% (3)	12% (3)

*The overall graphic includes all who indicated any level of agreement (agree to strongly agree)

Summary

In looking across the surveys, there is only modest support for a key public feature of the accountability system—giving letter grades to schools. While there was some disagreement among survey respondents as to what should be used as an additional accountability measure, the general-survey results support the current plan. The issue of how schools with high rates of low-income students will or will not be negatively affected by the accountability measures and what is reported on the transparency dashboard was a major objection to the planned approach that warrants further attention.