The New Accountability

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Abstract
As part of standards-based reform, states and districts are designing new approaches to holding schools and districts accountable for discharging their missions. Virtually every state and thousands of districts are working on developing standards for student learning and aligning student assessments to those expectations. Most are taking the next step which is to use achievement of the standards as a basis for accountability.

The new accountability approaches emerging from this work differ from more traditional systems with respect to one or more of seven factors. District/school approval is being linked to student performance rather than compliance to regulations; accountability is focusing more on schools as the unit of improvement; continuous improvement strategies involving school-level planning around specific performance targets are being adopted; new approaches to classroom inspection are being developed; more categories or levels of accreditation are being developed; school-level test scores are being publicly reported; and more consequences are being attached to performance levels. This policy brief reviews these developments and discusses issues arising from their design and implementation. It draws on several CPRE studies of accountability, most of which are still in progress. Therefore a number of the findings we cite, particularly about the effects of emerging accountability systems, are tentative. However, since policymakers are actively designing and modifying accountability policies, we believe that conveying currently available information about how they seem to be working, even if that information is preliminary, is worthwhile.

Comments
View on the CPRE website.

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