

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

“TRANSPARENCY AS A FOUNDATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY”

BY SOUTHERN ECHO, INC. AND THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA CATALYST ROUNDTABLE REGARDING THE PROPOSED LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT “REPORT CARD” TO BE ADOPTED BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Purpose: The proposed Report Card is intended to provide communities with sufficient transparency about what is going on in the schools to enable them to hold their schools accountable to deliver the quality of education to which our children are entitled. Effective, knowledgeable parent and student engagement with the school district requires a substantial amount of information. The following 12 recommendations are intended to expand and improve the content and availability of the proposed new Report Card. We are proposing that these changes ought to be mandatory and not merely voluntary.

Recommendation #1: Mandatory: The **ratings of individual schools** ought to be included in the Report Card so that parents can know the ratings of individual schools within the district. While this may make it difficult to include all of this information on a single page, it is more important that parents and students have this information to assist their engagement with the schools than to have a Report Card that is only one page long.

Recommendation #2: Mandatory: The Report Card should include a **profile of each individual school**, similar to the profile for the district as a whole. Parents and students need to have access to this information to understand which individual schools are doing well, and which are not. This information needs to be published in the newspaper, available in hard copy from the school district, and should also be posted on the school district website and the website of the State Dept. of Education. For example, if the district graduation rate is 70 percent overall, it is also important to know the graduation rate for each individual high school within the district.

Recommendation #3: Mandatory: There should be a breakdown of the **racial composition** of the staff (teachers, administrators and support personnel) for the entire school district and for each individual school. This will assist parents and students to understand whether there has been compliance with federal court school desegregation orders and trends in employment practices for both the district and individual schools.

Recommendation #4: Mandatory: In the profiles of the district and individual schools the itemizations ought to include both **actual numbers as well as the percentages**. In this way parents and students can understand how many individuals are involved, as well as the percentage represented. For example, if it is important to know that the graduation rate is 70 percent, it is also important to know how many students that percentage represents.

Recommendation #5: Mandatory: The goal is to promote transparency and understanding among parents and students. This cannot be done effectively if the terminology used in the Report Card is not well understood by those who are reading it. The Report Card is not aimed at “insiders”, but the general public. Therefore, it is essential to include in the Report Card a **glossary of terms** that define key terms such as:

- a. Quality Distribution Index,
- b. “highly qualified”,
- c. “national board certified”,
- d. “emergency/provisional teachers”,
- e. “graduation rate”,

- f. “completion rate”
- g. “dropout rate”, and
- h. each of the terms used in the profile of school revenues and expenditures, and in the budget profile, including such items as “millage”, “assessed value”, etc.

Recommendation #6: Mandatory: It is important that parents and students understand the degree of success of students on standardized tests in the **district as a whole**, and in **each individual school**. Therefore, the Report Card ought to include a breakdown by numbers and percentages of the **Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT)** and the **Subject Area Testing Program (SATP)**. For the MCT the breakdown ought to set forth the breakdown of scores by numbers and percentages of students in the 4 primary scoring categories, and for the SATP by the numbers and percentages of students who passed or failed the 4 primary subject areas.

Recommendation #7: Mandatory: The Report Card ought to include data that apportions to both school district and to each school within the district the **actual federal, state and local dollars** allocated, and the percentage for each category of use, such as “instruction”. This data is already encoded by individual schools in the school district budget matrix. This is the kind of information parents and students need to participate in the school budgeting process each year.

Recommendation #8: Mandatory: In the Report Card the district profile of revenues and expenditures should include **dollar amounts as well as percentages** and the amount of the **fund balance** or **reserve fund** should also be included in the profile.

Recommendation #9: Mandatory: In the Report Card the district profile ought to break down the district’s federal dollars by the different categories through which the funds are received, and the different categories for how the federal dollars have actually been expended.

Recommendation #10: Mandatory: The Report Card ought to include in the district profile the **actual total millage dollars** received by the school district as a result of the millage rate applied to the assessed value. Also, the profile ought to state the dollar value of a mill in that school district. This will assist parents and students to compare the impact of different millage rates among the school districts in their area or across the state.

Recommendation #11: Mandatory: The Report Card ought to include under student data the following information about **student disciplinary practices** for both the district as a whole and by individual schools:

- a. the number of incidents of students assigned to in-school and out-of-school suspensions,
- b. the number of students who have been expelled,
- c. the number of incidents of paddling and the number of student who have been hit with a paddle by a school employee,
- d. the number of incidents of disciplinary referrals,
- e. the number of students who have received alternative school referrals, and
- f. the number of students who have received juvenile court referrals.

Recommendation #12: Mandatory: The Report Card ought to include under teacher data identify the number of occasions that the Teacher Support Team (TST) or Response to Intervention (RTI) process has been invoked.

Submitted by:

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Citizens for Educational Awareness (Montgomery County)

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Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County

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