



Alternative Schools in Accountability

IL Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

February 27-28, 2020

Two primary issues

Issue #1: CSI Threshold

- Including alternative schools in CSI cut score calculations suppresses the threshold value for flagging underperforming schools (discussed in December)

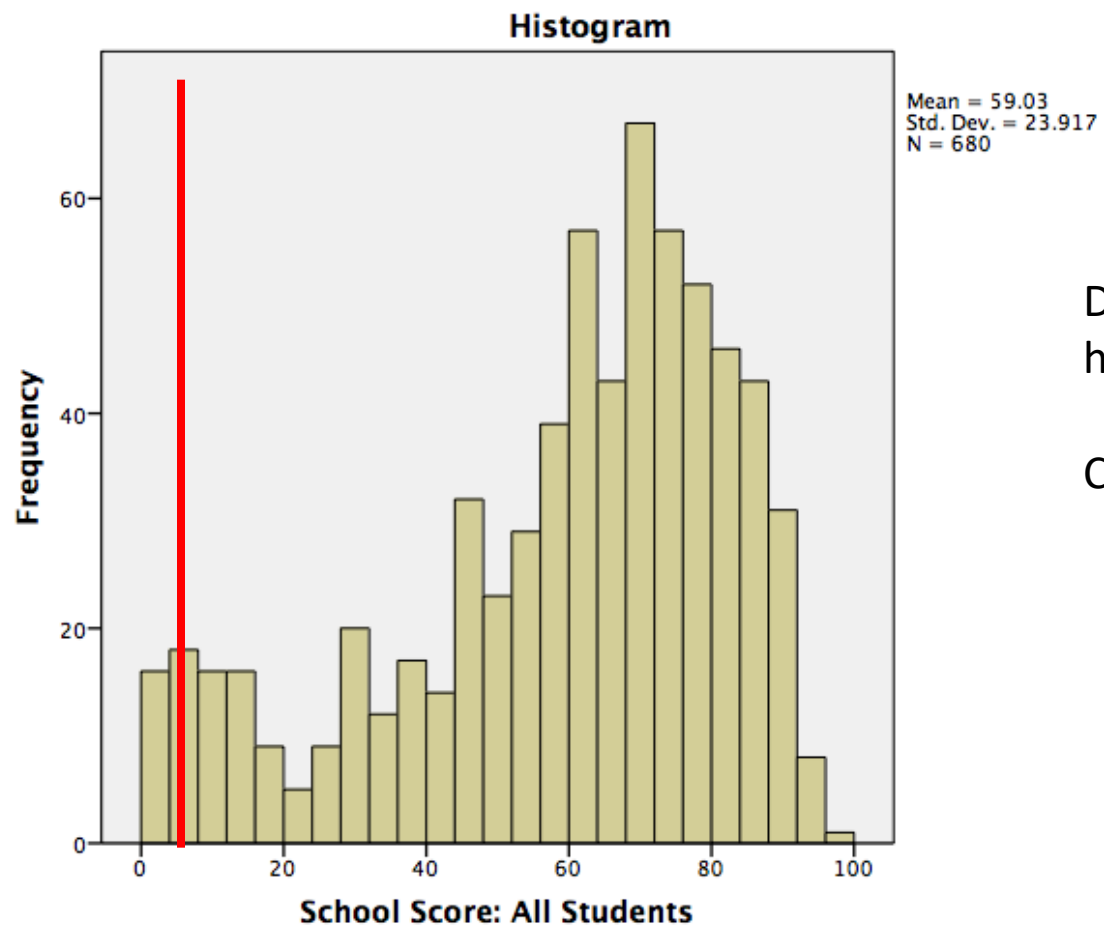
Issue #2: One-Size Does Not Fit All

- The accountability system does not meaningfully differentiate among alternative schools and provides limited information to inform local decision making

Issue #1 - Review

- The threshold for identifying underperforming schools is the lowest 5%
- That value is particularly low for high schools: 8.17, compared to 35.33 for elementary/ middle schools
- One reason for this may be that alternative schools, which typically have lower overall index scores, are ‘suppressing’ the HS cut
- Consequently, few traditional high schools are flagged as underperforming (i.e., 10 out of 680)

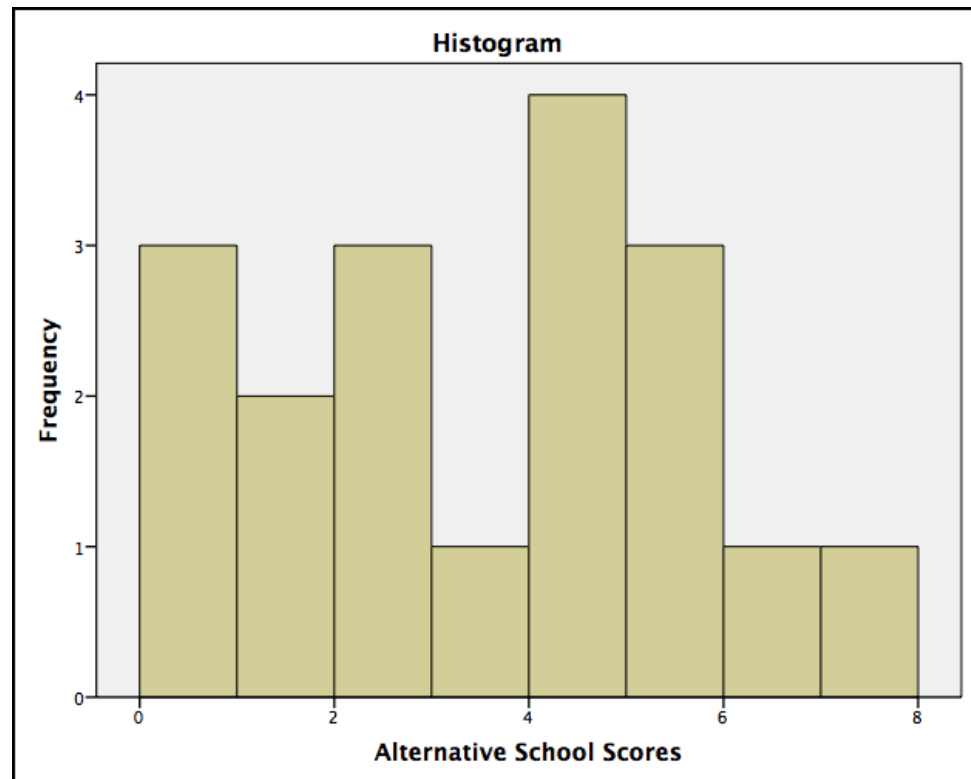
Distribution of School Scores for All Schools



Distribution of school scores for all high schools

Cut for lowest 5% is 8.17

Distribution of Alternative School Scores



Mean = 3.65

SD = 2.1

Range: 1-8

N=18

All Alternative Schools are in the 'Lowest Performing' category

Alternative Schools comprise 32% of all schools rated 'Lowest Performing'

If alternative schools were removed from the distribution, the lowest performing cut would increase to approximately 12

Options for Consideration

Options	Implications/Considerations
<p>1. Flag all of these schools as CSI, but remove them from the calculations used to determine the threshold associated with the bottom 5% of schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All alternative schools still targeted for CSI • The cut-score associated with the bottom 5% increases so more high schools will be flagged as underperforming due to a low performing sub-group (see next slide) • Since all Alternative schools will already be flagged for CSI, none will be flagged for TSI.
<p>2. Designate these schools as their own distinct “type” (e.g., Elementary, High school, Alternative High Schools) and use the index score to identify the bottom 5% of alternative schools, and the threshold for underperforming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With 18 alternative schools, only 1 would be flagged as CSI for bottom 5%; however most of the others will be flagged for a graduation rate below 67% • The cut score associated with the bottom 5%, if used as the threshold for underperforming will be extremely low (e.g., 1).
<p>3. Same as the option above, however use the 5% threshold for non-alternative high schools to identify underperforming schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With 18 alternative schools, only 1 would be flagged as CSI for bottom 5%; however most of the others will be flagged for a graduation rate below 67% • Schools that are not flagged for CSI will likely be flagged as underperforming.

What is the impact of removing alternative schools from the calculation of lowest 5%?

- If we removed alternative schools from calculating the lowest 5% threshold..
 - In 2019 the new cut (12.2) would have flagged 7.9% of the schools (54 schools of 680)
 - However only 7 new schools would be classified ‘Lowest Performing’ because most of the schools newly flagged (schools with scores between 8.17 and 12.2) were already identified for low graduation rate.
 - These 7 potentially newly identified schools were actually classified commendable in 2019.

Discussion Questions

- What, if any additional options might the state consider?
- Which of the following options is best aligned with the state's goals?

Issue 2: One Size Does not Fit All

- For a variety of reasons, alternative schools serving at-risk students tend to perform poorly in ‘traditional’ school accountability systems.
 - Distinct focus/ mission of the school
 - Mobility: students many transfer in and out, which limits availability of information
 - Impact of cumulative effects: students often start well behind
- Low performance on a traditional accountability metrics can be interpreted one of two ways.
 - It is a true indicator of performance
 - The system is not well-designed for these distinctive schools.
- Increasingly, policy makers have realized the latter is a more persuasive position.
- Ultimately, a system that doesn’t ‘fit’ fails to provide useful feedback and incentivize the right actions.

Options for Consideration

- Given the challenges of applying a ‘one-size-fits-all’ ESSA model for alternative schools, states have explored a variety of different options:
 - Establish a new alternative school model that is used to provide useful information back to schools and support decisions regarding appropriate supports for schools identified under ESSA. (WY)
 - Establish a slightly new or modified version of the traditional model that is used to inform reporting of school performance under ESSA (CA)
 - Identify additional indicators or use unique procedures to provide stakeholders with additional information about the performance of alternative schools completely separate from the accountability.
 - AR has established “Core Quality Program Indicators” that are evaluated through self-report measures and annual observations conducted by the alternative education unit

Dimensions of Difference

Dimension	Similar	Different
Selection of Indicators	Both systems include the same set of performance indicators	Alternative school system identifies additional or different indicators
Performance Standards	Alternative schools are held to the same expectations for performance on common indicators	Different expectations for performance are defined for alternative schools on one or more common indicators (e.g., achievement)
Flexibility & Choice	Overall school ratings or performance determinations are based on a common set of state-defined indicators that apply to all schools.	Alternative school leaders can select or identify indicators that best support interpretations about their school for use in establishing an overall rating.
Weighting and Aggregation	<p>Common indicators receive the same weight across both systems.</p> <p>The methods used to aggregate results across indicators are the same (e.g., index, decision matrix)</p>	Procedures used for aggregation and/or the relative emphasis afforded to common indicators differ from that represented in the traditional school model.
Reporting of Results	Results are reported using the same labels and performance categories represented in the traditional system.	Alternative school results are reported on a different metric and/or using a unique set of performance categories.

State Example - WY

- In 2015 WY convened alternative school leaders to establish a unique alternative model for the state's approximately 22 alternative schools.
- The alternative model meets the requirements outlined in state law related to school accountability (WAEA), but does not align with requirements defined within ESSA.
- Under WY' ESSA plan the same procedures are used to identify alternative schools for TSI/CSI as traditional schools.
 - *Data resulting from the alternative school model should be used to inform the improvement plans submitted by alternative schools designated as CSI/TSI.*

Comparability of WY alternative and traditional models for state accountability system

Indicator	Same	Different
Academic Performance	Tests used to measure achievement. Student performance standards	Specifications for “meeting expectations” at the school level related to academic achievement.
Academic Growth	Growth is measured and evaluated in the same way across models	Increased emphasis given to growth in the process of determining a school’s overall performance level in the state accountability
Post-Secondary Readiness	Considers 9 th grade credit earning and some common measures of College and Career Readiness	Considers credit earning for 9-11 th grade (not just 9 th) Considers a broader range of readiness indicators (e.g., GED attainment)
School Climate	Unique to the Alternative Model	Consider a school’s participation rate as well as annual improvement in determining whether expectations have been met.
Student Success Plan	Unique to the Alternative Model	Requires development of a student-specific plan to accumulate evidence of positive engagement within and across school years.

California

- Development of the DASS program – Dashboard for Alternative School Status.
- Schools that participate in DASS will have their information displayed on the same Dashboard and be measured on the same set of indicators as non-alternative schools.
- DASS schools will receive one of five color-coded performance levels for each indicator, identical to those given to non-alternative schools.
- In order to fairly evaluate the success and progress of alternative schools that serve high-risk students modified measures have were developed for the Academic Indicator and the Graduation Rate Indicator

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/documents/whatisthedassprogram.pdf>

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/documents/dass1yrgrad.pdf>

Discussion Questions

- What do you see as the primary pros and cons of these different options?
- What factors should ISBE consider in determining which type of model to explore?
- If they were to supplement or modify the existing model for reporting purposes, what should be the primary focus of attention?