



# Performance Management

*Second in a series of six*

## *‘Everything we do is purposeful’*

In February 2006, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education adopted a policy directing Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to use performance management to improve educational effectiveness. The Board also directed Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to do three specific things to increase accountability: Develop a school performance classification system to reliably measure progress on academic standards and other performance goals. Use the classification system to develop rewards and sanctions for schools and their staff which include site-level freedom. Ensure that the work is transparent and shared across the community.

The district began a series of meetings in November 2006 with principals and others to forge a design for this strategy. In February 2007, a committee was formed to begin the work. The district also brought two outside vendors into the process. The RAND Corporation was engaged in March 2007 to develop a set of achievement and persistence metrics for School Progress Reports. Mariner, a Charlotte-based business intelligence firm, was engaged at the same time to build a technology platform to support and make transparent the accountability measures, which led to development of the district’s Data Dashboard.

The result was a district-wide series of reforms, structured to take place over multiple years and intended to align all accountability and instructional practices with the goal of increasing student achievement. In the words of Dr. Peter C. Gorman, superintendent, “Everything we do is purposeful.” CMS is aligning its practices so that all tests, measurements, classroom practice and school management are focused on maximizing student achievement. Included in the alignment

are school-based instructional practices, including support for teachers’ common planning time, meaningful formative assessment and professional development to improve the quality of teaching.

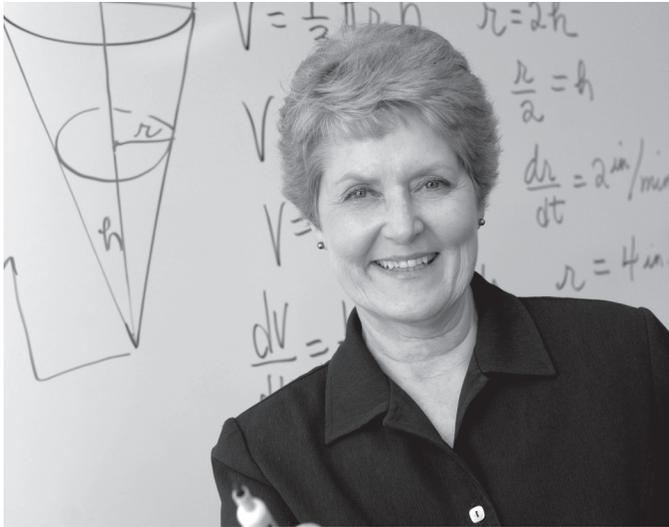
The district’s work in these areas, clustered under the umbrella term of performance management, falls into four broad areas: Accountability; curriculum and instruction; staffing and leadership, and performance measurement and technology support. This white paper will look at three innovative tools for school evaluation developed by the Office of Accountability. Using a mix of quantitative, qualitative and process measures to comprehensively capture the work done at an individual school, these tools are paving the way for performance management.

### **Capturing a whole school, not just pieces**

As we began developing the framework for change, it was clear that the CMS community wanted an accountability system that was fundamentally about improving student achievement. This led us to a question: Does accountability actually create improvement in student achievement, or does it only create a sense of urgency around this work? We concluded that it was the latter.

It’s also important to remember where the work of raising student achievement takes place: in schools and in classrooms. So an effective accountability system must support and build the instructional capacity of teachers and the instructional leadership of principals.

CMS principals and stakeholders wanted an accountability system that was more than test scores. “Principals told us that there were great things happening in their classrooms and buildings every day – but these things were not recognized or rewarded, and no one else was doing them,” said Jonathan Raymond, chief accountability officer. “So we set out to identify and measure what one principal described as ‘the nuances in my building’ by developing qualitative indicators.”



Raymond said that the district also heard something else from many educators at CMS: The current federal and state accountability metrics—based on summative tests—weren't adequate indicators of teaching and learning within schools. Moreover, the summative tests didn't provide the schools with useful and adequate diagnostic student information, making it hard to determine how to improve student achievement. So the district decided to focus on developing quantitative indicators with multiple measures.

Another factor: Accountability work at CMS is grounded in increasing student achievement, so the district wanted to create a cycle of continuous learning and improvement in our schools. School improvement plans and processes were chosen as the primary vehicle for schools to focus their quantitative and qualitative information. As a result, the plans have become living documents, rather than an annual compliance exercise. School improvement plans set expectations for using data to set targets, measure results against those targets, and revise strategies and adjust instruction and interventions.

Alignment was also a key element. The district is guided by a strategic plan (set to run through 2010; a second plan for the next four years is under way) that sets out seven specific goals for the district. District officials agreed that it was essential that all reforms align with these goals – making sure that everyone was on the same page as the work progressed.

Finally, the district wanted our work to set a new tone within CMS, shifting the culture of the district to one of increased collaboration. “We wanted to help break the cycle of teachers staying in their classrooms, principals staying in their buildings and district administrators staying in their offices – all working hard and doing their best to survive, but essentially working in silos,” says Raymond. As a result, much discussion focused on

using accountability to encourage the adults in education to work together for increased achievement.

Thus, accountability must support a cycle of continuous learning and improvement in schools. A sense of urgency is created by providing schools with information, support and pressure to move the work forward.

## Quantitative measures – School Progress Reports

To assist in developing better quantitative measures, CMS engaged the RAND Corporation in March 2007. RAND was asked to develop a set of achievement and persistence metrics (the School Progress Report) that would shape the performance-classification system for individual schools. CMS also wanted the School Progress Reports to show how each school was teaching students within that school's context of challenges and resources.

RAND provided CMS with a rating of all schools for the school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. In October 2007, district administrators presented several versions of the performance classification system to the Board of Education during an accountability workshop. The versions used multiple ways to classify performance, including letter grades, percentages and stars. A majority of the Board preferred a percentage grade. The Board also agreed to modify its policy to give the district more time to develop and pilot this plan. CMS used the 2007-2008 school year to continue developing a school classification system, including several new measures that were presented to the Board in June 2008.

The first School Progress Reports were published and distributed in December 2008. Measures used in the reports were also reviewed by an independent panel of accountability experts at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The panel concluded that the process used to develop the measures was appropriate and recommended some minor changes to the measures, which were incorporated into the final School Progress Report template. CMS has recently completed its second year of districtwide School Progress Reports.

## Qualitative measures – School Quality Reviews

Cambridge Education was engaged to help the district develop its own school-inspection system, called School Quality Review (SQR). It was modeled after a United Kingdom inspection model used in more than 50 countries and also in New York City, the state of Connecticut and at Knowledge is Power Program schools. In April 2007, CMS assembled teams of current and former principals to develop quality statements, a framework and a rating scale. In May 2007, the district began

---

training the first cohort of 48 CMS school quality reviewers. These reviewers are CMS principals, area superintendents, area executive directors, learning community staff and central-office curriculum and instruction staff.

The reason for this training is twofold. First, if CMS is to transform itself and increase student achievement, it will be done by the district's current and future instructional leaders. Training them as SQR reviewers allows them to observe great instructional practices they can bring back to their own buildings. Second, it helps build collaboration by getting people out of daily routines and work environments. Partnered with a Cambridge Education reviewer, CMS reviewers have an opportunity to work and learn with other instructional leaders.

A key feature of the SQR process is the self-evaluation that precedes a school team visit and is aligned with the final report. The self-evaluation is based on the SQR rubric and is completed by the principal and staff. Copies of the self-evaluation are provided to the review team in advance of the school review.

For the school visit, led by a Cambridge Education reviewer, the team spends two days at the school, interviewing staff, teachers, parents, students and observing classroom instruction and examining student work in an effort to answer the question "Are children learning here and how do we know?" After the visit, the team creates a written review identifying what the school is doing well and where the school needs to improve. Final reports are sent to the principal and the area superintendent. Within 30 days, principals are expected to share the results with the team and the community. They are also expected to discuss with the area superintendent the two or three top priorities from the report, how these will be addressed through adjustments to the school improvement plan and what additional resources may be needed.



School quality reviews are a formative process designed to be a blueprint for the cycle of continuous improvement. During the fall of 2007, CMS piloted reviews in 22 of 167 schools. The district reviewed elementary, middle and high schools ranging from low- to high-performing. Using feedback from those reviews, CMS adjusted the rubric and developed a review orientation for principals. Several training modules were created to address issues identified for improvement in a review.

In the spring of 2008, another 20 schools were reviewed and more fine-tuning of the process and the rubric followed.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the district completed 47 School Quality Reviews. Subsequent reviews will occur depending on the outcome of the baseline review (and available funding). Schools with lower ratings will be reviewed annually. Schools with higher ratings will be reviewed every three years.

In partnership with Cambridge Education, the district provided further training for new reviewers in February 2009, as well as refresher training for veteran reviewers. Thus far, CMS has trained more than 144 CMS reviewers. Demand from principals to be included remains strong. The district plans to have trained all principals to be reviewers and to have reviewed all schools at least once by the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

### **Process measures – School Improvement Plans**

In the summer of 2007, CMS began redesigning its School Improvement Plans. The plans were aligned with the district's *Strategic Plan 2010: Educating Students to Compete Locally, Nationally and Internationally*. The district identified appropriate outcomes for all elementary, middle and high schools. Each school is responsible for developing strategies to achieve the desired outcomes and for identifying a few additional outcomes that reflect that school's unique challenges.

These are three-year plans that are regularly monitored and adjusted based on new data and information, such as School Quality Reviews, annual self-evaluation and the School Progress Reports – making School Improvement Plans a *de facto* contract between the principal and the staff, the area superintendent and the community.

Each school has a maximum of four outcomes and each school helps choose the outcomes. Area superintendents must approve all outcomes and continually monitor progress. The outcomes also are structured to incorporate requirements for Title I schools in improvement status, as well as for schools being restructured, so that individual schools are not duplicating efforts to meet district, state and federal mandates.

---

The CMS goal is simple and far-reaching: How can the district build instructional capacity in classrooms and school buildings to increase student achievement? The district believes that a mix of information, support and pressure helps create a sense of urgency for this work. What follows is how each piece of the system provides these three elements.

School Progress Reports provide information by using multiple metrics to give schools information on how effectively they are teaching children, given the challenges the children bring and the available resources. School personnel are also trained in the Harvard Data Wise process to use collaborative data teams to identify priority areas for teaching and learning. They provide pressure by shaping outcomes and strategies of school improvement plans and forming the basis of the school-classification system.

School Quality Reviews provide information by identifying school strengths and areas for improvement. They also give schools access to information showing what has been successful elsewhere in the district. Support is provided through training for CMS instructional leaders to be school quality reviewers. We also provide professional development and other support to address areas for improvement (including how to use the reports and self-evaluation for continuous improvement). The reviews provide pressure by identifying areas of improvement to adjust school improvement focus.

School Improvement Plans provide information by giving schools goals, outcome targets and data (School Progress Reports and School Quality Reviews) to develop plans. They provide support to help principals and school leadership teams develop their plans, using information from self-evaluation, School Progress Reports and School Quality Reviews. They provide pressure because they are a key component of principal evaluation and are continuously monitored by area superintendents.



## Summary

The tools described in this report are helping CMS set clearly defined goals for academic achievement as well as map out strategies to achieve them. Increasing academic achievement is a multilayered process – there is no single silver bullet that will get the job done. Instead, each school must work in a variety of ways to improve and strengthen teaching and learning. The tools described in this report will provide longitudinal data over time. They also require a process of self-analysis and evaluation essential to meaningful improvement. Together, when used with other tools and strategies employed by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (*see other white papers in this series*), they will help the district move students to new levels of learning and growth.

---

## About Us

*Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is North Carolina's second-largest school district, with 137,000 students (pre-kindergarten to grade 12), 180 schools and 19,000 employees. The district has been recognized nationally for excellence and innovation. These white papers are an informational series designed to share the district's experience and expertise with others involved in public education. If you would like additional information about CMS, please call the office of public information at (980) 343-7450.*

---

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

P.O. Box 30035 • Charlotte, NC 28230 • Phone: 980.343.3000 • Fax: 980.343.3647 • [www.cms.k12.nc.us](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us) • CMS TV

*In compliance with federal law, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools administers all education programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination against any person on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age or disability.*

December 2009

Reach Further. **Global competitiveness starts here.**