

GSD Faces Changing Accountability Standards



Superintendent's Message

Dr. David Daigneault

Although GSD always takes a proactive approach in preparing our teachers and students for testing procedures and curriculum components, we are facing new challenges beginning this year with another new accountability system. Changes to the curriculum, testing, and evaluation methods, mandated by the Mississippi Legislature and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), have again provided new demands for GSD.

One area of the new accountability model is determined by student growth, with special emphasis placed on the 25% of students scoring in the lowest percentile. Growth is determined by an increase in student performance or proficiency levels during one academic year. The same four proficiency levels are used as in the former accountability model, advanced, proficient, basic, and minimal. However, growth is determined differently.

The continuously evolving curriculum changes, testing methods, and school and student accountability models provide a constant stream of conflicting information disturbing the delivery of educational concepts. The rotating criteria delivered by the Legislature and MDE makes it difficult for our teachers and administrators to provide a consistent focus for our students' learning processes. A moving target is challenging to reach.

To compound the problems of the new accountability model, the method for computing the high school graduation rate will now be comprised of only those students who graduate with a regular diploma. This method eliminates graduation credit for GED recipients, students who earn certificates, and/or many SPED students. This accountability model discounts the efforts of these students and counts them as dropouts in our District graduation rate. However, using last year's computation the graduation rate for GSD was 72.4% and this year, using the new model our graduation rate was 72%. If our graduation rate for this year was figured using the old method, our graduation rate would have been 83.4%, demonstrating major progress for GHS!! Sometimes the changing requirements seem to be constructed to avoid showing the improvements and progress of our State's students.

An additional hurdle for the high school will encompass the addition of ACT scores into the mix of GHS accountability. All eleventh grade student are required to be tested on the ACT, so therefore, all ACT skills will be incorporated into core academic subjects this year.

ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

- English - 18 or higher
- Reading - 22 or higher
- Math - 22 or higher

All 11th grade students will be given the ACT this year!

To add to the mix of new accountability is the Literacy Based Promotion Act that places emphasis on grade-level reading skills. Beginning this school year, students will not be promoted

Students End Summer Break by Meeting Faculty



(back) Mandy Logan, (front l to r) Larkin Logan, and Kindergarten teacher Jane Worrell



(back l to r) Chakita Hogan, Kindergarten teacher Jessica Baker, and Robert Woodard



Katie Beth Bennett and GMS Assistant Principal Angela Cooley

Photo right: GHS teacher Sherry Cook and Davarious Wilborn



Photo left: (back) GUES teacher Megan Westmoreland, LaShea Whitehurst, and (front) Jaidyn Laird

Photo below: (front) GUES teacher Sarah Sherman, Christianna Anderson, (back) Annette Anderson



Photo left: Danielle Robinson and GHS Career Tech teacher Cassandra Williams



to the fourth grade unless they pass the reading assessment called MKASS as mandated by law.

The GSD has devised a plan of action to meet the needs of the new accountability model. To accommodate the modifications we intend to:

- Increase the percentage of students who are proficient and advanced
- Increase the growth of all students
- Emphasize the growth of the bottom scoring 25% of students
- Increase ACT scores
- Increase participation in Advanced Placement classes, Dual Credit classes, and Dual Enrollment classes
- Increase reading performance of K-3 students in preparation for the 3rd grade MKASS

Literacy-Based Promotion Act

- Emphasis on grade-level reading skills
- Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year
 - To be promoted to 4th grade, students must pass the Reading Assessment (MKASS)
- GSD proactive response included a winter and spring diagnostic test.

Our support structure will be strong and focused and will use data to drive instruction with:

- Specialists to assist teachers
- Consultants to help in difficult areas
- Classroom visits by principals and assistant principals
- Additional computer lab time
- Creating and revising K-8 units of study to target tested objectives
- Creating subject area units of study to target specific tested objectives

We are determined to make a positive difference in the lives and education of our students. It is not the curriculum that produces great students; it is the teacher who makes all the difference. Our teachers are admired for their care, concern, patience, influence, and for believing in our students.

In spite of these many obstacles, I am very optimistic about the future of GSD because I know that our teachers and administrators will do what is best and what is right for our children, making a positive difference in their lives. Despite the moving targets ascribed by the new accountability model from the Mississippi Legislature and the Mississippi Department of Education, GSD has devised a plan of action and implementation to attack the new standards. We know that what a child receives inside the classroom extends much further than the school, dramatically enhancing a child's life with each small step.