

2014



**Upper
Arlington
Quality Profile**

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Authored by the Quality Profile Work Group



UPPER ARLINGTON STRATEGIC BRIEFING PAPER

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Quality Profile Work Group

The purpose of this document is to explain the reasoning behind the metrics recommended in the June 2014 strategic briefing paper prepared by the Quality Profile work group. It is organized into three parts:

- Assessment of current measures
- Preliminary findings and implications of core elements
- Benchmarking

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT MEASURES

State Report Card

The state report card measures schools and districts on multiple dimensions of performance. Because it is administered by the Ohio Department of Education, there is presumably some degree of data integrity in reporting. The major weakness in this system is that it tries to fit all 600+ Ohio school districts into one standardized framework. This can lead to some spurious comparisons. In addition, the methodology is undergoing substantial revision that makes comparison over time much more difficult. Nevertheless, it is the best known and most comprehensive measure available; therefore, we recommend components of it be included in core metrics, but not relied on exclusively.

National Rankings

As part of our analysis, the work group examined available national rankings of school districts. Although school decisions are local, the world our graduates confront after graduation is national and international. Therefore, a broader perspective is not only helpful, but essential. We identified three independent ranking systems for which at least some background data is available. All three are prepared by national news organizations specifically *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, and *The Washington Post*.

1. *U.S. News and World Report*: This is the oldest ranking system, having been around since 2007. It ranks individual high schools, not districts, on a combination of the proportion of students that take at least one Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) test and the proportion that pass at least one AP or IB test. This is the only measure used. These rankings are compiled using data that is two years old, so it is a measure of *past* performance as opposed to *current* performance. In 2013, Upper Arlington High School ranked 24 out of 832 Ohio high schools rated, and 590 out of 19,411 schools ranked nationally.
2. *Newsweek*: Sponsors a more comprehensive set of measures that reflect graduation rates, college acceptance rates, performance on college preparatory tests, and other factors. Due to the uncertain future of *Newsweek*, this metric may not exist going forward. In the latest available ranking (2013) Upper Arlington finished 14th in the state of Ohio, and 272 out of 2,000 top high schools that were ranked nationally.
3. *The Washington Post*: This ranking uses only the proportion of students who take AP or IB tests, not the proportion passing, which makes it easier for school districts to inflate their scores by increasing the number of students who take the tests. It does not include any measure for how well students perform on the tests. Upper Arlington finished 5th in Ohio in this ranking, and 270 out of 22,000 high schools nationally.

These results show some of the challenges of trying to rank schools or school districts on a national basis. Upper Arlington ranks anywhere from 5th to 24th in Ohio depending on the

national index used. Clearly these rankings can be subjective, and the standardized tests used to calculate them do not measure all the critical dimensions of a good education such as creativity, passion, citizenship, and choice. While it is important to benchmark performance on a statewide, national, and even international basis, it is also important to do so thoughtfully and evolve into a more sophisticated measurement system over time.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF CORE ELEMENTS

Our recommendations for the first generation of performance measures for Upper Arlington Schools include: specific items encompassing academic achievement, learning opportunities, community engagement, and a culture of stewardship. All would be updated annually in the UA Quality Profile Report on the district's website. A subset of these are marked by an asterisk, and would be part of UA's annual Quality Profile Summary. A comprehensive summary of the proposed measures is shown in Figure 1 at the end of this section.

Academic Achievement: Rigorous and relevant academic experiences that provide opportunities for all students to reach their potential

This includes graduation rates, standardized tests, and other measures to evaluate academic progress, readiness for college, and job readiness.

1. Graduation rate*. This is a threshold measure. A failure to graduate is failure for both the individual and the community. Upper Arlington's four-year graduation rate is very high, so improvement will be difficult, but benchmarks will allow for comparison against districts with similar demographic factors.
2. K-3 literacy*. This is a leading indicator of long-term academic performance. This measure will become part of the statewide report card in 2015, with some information provided in 2014. This measure is determined by monitoring students who are not meeting grade-level expectations in reading in one grade level, and gives credit to districts that move those students into a proficient status the following year. This analysis is applied to each grade K-3, and is reported in one summative score by ODE each year.
3. ACT/SAT scores. These standardized tests have historically been used to measure college readiness. They have been in use for years, so we know a lot about them. Results vary by who decides to take the test, but they are widely accepted. More UA students take the ACT test, so we recommend that be the primary marker.
4. Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) passage rates. This is a measure of successful completion of college-level coursework and reflects a high level of academic rigor. As a first generation measure, we propose that UA report the percentage of students who pass AP and IB exams. In the future, more sophisticated measure could be developed by multiplying an average cost per credit hour times the number of credit hours earned to determine how much parents and students save on college tuition.
5. College course remediation. The Ohio Board of Regents tracks the number of students who require college remedial course work in mathematics and English by school district. Although this includes students attending public universities and community colleges in Ohio, it is potentially a good measure of how college ready UA graduates are if a standard can be developed to provide a comparable measure across all institutions.
6. National Merit Scholars. This metric is one of the few national measures of academic achievement. One option is to count just the absolute number of National Merit Scholars, which tends to favor larger districts. Another is to report the proportion of National Merit Scholars, which tends to favor smaller districts.
7. Career pathways and other vocational opportunities. Although more than 90 percent of UA graduates go on to attend college, some don't for a variety of reasons. A first generation measure can be to count the number of opportunities. However, in the future this can be enhanced to ensure these students are also prepared to pursue whatever career path they choose.

8. 21st century skills. In 2010, UA identified six 21st century skills, and is in the process of integrating them into the curriculum. The six skills are: complex thinker, communicator, collaborator, global citizen, self-directed individual, and creative thinker and innovator. A first generation measure can be to use the rubrics that UA teachers created to assess progress.
9. Performance index ranking*. The performance index on the state report card is a widely-circulated, comprehensive measure of academic achievement. The performance index measures the achievement of every student, not just whether or not they have reached a level of “proficient.” This measure will undergo changes in the future as new cut-off scores are established.
10. Post-graduation success*. This is included as a measure of success after high school. Six new measures of post-graduation success will be added to the state report card in 2014. Another option is to go through the Ohio Education Research Center (OERC), which uses the Ohio Longitudinal Data Archive (OLDA) to track college and workforce performance. The limitation of this approach is that it is only able to track graduates who stay within Ohio. Yet another option is to use the National Student Clearinghouse StudentTracker, which tracks nationwide postsecondary enrollment and graduation data.

Learning Opportunities: Opportunities for creative expression and exploration of individual interests

Upper Arlington values giving its students and parents a variety of choices to maximize students’ education. This set of measures provides an expanded view of educational quality that is not captured by standardized testing. Consequently, we recommend these four measures to track learning opportunities in UA:

11. Number of co- and extra-curricular activities. This indicator measures the breadth of choices offered to students to express their creativity and individuality. It is assessed by counting the number of voluntary organizations offered including: clubs, athletic teams, academic teams, and programs in the arts.
12. Student involvement in co- and extra-curricular activities*. Providing student their own opportunities to develop in the arts, music, athletics, and clubs is a core value of the UA Schools. A first generation measure is to count the number of students participating across all of these activities. In the future, a more sophisticated measure would be to track the proportion of students who take advantage of at least one of these opportunities. An even more advanced measure would be to track how much students learn from these activities.
13. Participation in additional credit-based learning opportunities. This metric attempts to measure the degree to which our students take advantage of opportunities to earn college credit. This would include dual enrollment and post-secondary options as well as students participating in AP coursework and the International Baccalaureate program.
14. Enhanced offsite educational experiences. Participation in educational experiences outside Upper Arlington is an excellent way for students to be exposed to situations more like the diverse world they will encounter after graduation. These experiences help build an appreciation for, and acceptance of, different cultures. Examples include the 8th grade trip to Washington, D.C. and the high school orchestra’s trip to China. A tracking mechanism would have to be created to report this number.

Community Engagement: Opportunities to develop citizenship, teamwork, and integrity, and enhance partnerships between the school district and community

Measuring how engaged the community is in its schools and measuring how engaged the students are in the community are important elements of overall success. We propose these four measures to begin to get our arms around this issue:

15. Service learning participation*. All UA students are offered the opportunity to become involved in a formal service learning project in the community that is integrated with the

curriculum. Tracking what proportion of our students voluntarily choose to participate in this activity will give us one measure of student engagement in the community.

16. Community Partnerships. This is a measure of the degree to which UA is leveraging community resources to enhance student learning. A first generation measure would be to count the number of partnerships with outside organizations such as Columbus Symphony Orchestra, UA Civic Association, and area businesses. A tracking mechanism would have to be created to report this number.
17. Parent membership in Parent–Teacher Organization (PTO). Voluntary parent membership in the PTO is a preliminary measure of parent engagement.
18. Private Donations. One measure of community involvement is the degree to which residents donate money to the schools. Rather than focus on total dollars, which could be distorted by one large donor, we recommend focusing on the number of individual donors.

Culture of Stewardship: Holding ourselves accountable for the care of students and the responsible management of resources

As a steward of both public dollars and community expectations, it is important for UA Schools to measure how well it is doing with respect to managing finances, maintaining educational facilities, ensuring student safety, and promoting diversity.

19. School property tax rates*. The school property tax rate per \$100,000 of home valuation is important as a measure of what residents actually pay to support their schools.
20. Expenditures per pupil*. This is an important metric for comparing resources invested.
21. Efficiency savings goal*. This metric will track the degree to which the district has met the UA School's commitment to identify \$4.5 million in savings over three years.
22. External grants received. The total annual grant dollars received (e.g., Race to the Top, Straight A Fund) measures the district's ability to secure funding to enhance students' learning experiences.
23. Building Condition Index. This a measure commonly used in both the public and private sectors to determine how well an organization is taking care of its facilities. UA does not currently have this metric, but it is being developed.
24. State approved safety plan. Although this may seem automatic, many school districts do not have a state approved safety plan. This is a first generation measure that needs to be developed further.
25. Staff turnover rate. This measure is included to assess how well the district is engaging and managing its employees. Turnover rates that are too high may indicate a morale problem. The district needs to define a range of desirable turnover for both certified and classified staff, and then monitor it regularly.
26. Community confidence. A regular survey that asks a representative sample of community members if they feel UA Schools are on the right track with regard to providing a quality educational experience is one way to track community support over time. This survey could be modeled after Gallup national polls. Partnering with the City of UA on the survey administration would provide an opportunity to reduce the cost impact.