DENVER – More states are holding public schools and districts accountable with efforts such as school report cards, in some cases by discontinuing accreditation processes entirely or folding them into their existing accountability systems.

A 50-state analysis by the Education Commission of the States found that state lawmakers are assuming a stronger role in school accountability, resulting in a shift away from state-administered accreditation systems.

Among the findings of the report States Moving from Accreditation to Accountability released today:

- While 26 states have accreditation programs, all 50 have some type of accountability system.
- At least 11 states have merged their existing accreditation processes into their accountability systems.
- Six states – Alabama, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Rhode Island and Washington – have terminated their accreditation processes since 1998.

“For many years, accreditation was a process based on inputs, like building standards and student-teacher ratios. Accreditation has changed as states created accountability programs that focus on student and school performance,” said Micah Ann Wixom, the ECS policy analyst who reviewed state policies and authored the report. “Many accreditation systems now include performance-based accreditation standards, and several states now include accreditation as part of their state accountability systems.”

School accreditation policies vary widely from state to state. For example:

- Alaska, Kansas and South Carolina employ accreditation status as one of the performance measures included on school report cards.
- Mississippi, Missouri and Virginia use performance measures in an overall rating system that determines a school or district’s accreditation status.

There are similarities between accreditation and accountability; both systems are intended to measure the overall quality of a school or district. But there are distinct differences as well:

**Accountability**

- Includes academic standards, assessments, rewards and sanctions.
- Typically focus on both schools and districts.
- Usually driven by state legislatures.

**Accreditation**

- Tend to include input such as student-teacher ratios and physical classroom sizes.
- Typically focus on individual schools, though some states accredit districts.
- Usually crafted and overseen by state boards of education.

###

The Education Commission of the States was created by states, for states, in 1965. We track policy, translate research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another.