

# **New Hampshire Department of Education ESEA Flexibility Waiver Concept Paper**

Concept Paper

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### Introduction: A Shared Vision for Student Achievement

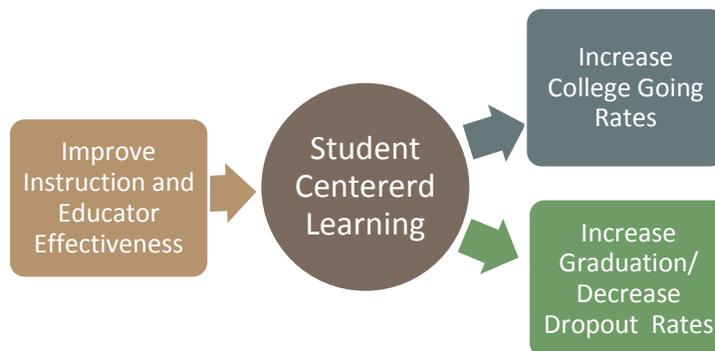
The New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) is pleased to present this concept paper describing its vision for innovative approaches to improve student learning outcomes. The features contained in this paper will ultimately form the basis for a possible ESEA Flexibility Waiver application to the U.S. Department of Education.

Because of dedicated and focused leaders and teachers, New Hampshire has a long history of education excellence. This excellence is derived from a strong commitment to a shared vision for student achievement. This shared vision has allowed for the state to be regularly recognized for high student achievement, leadership and an overall quality education system. But as times change our strategies need to evolve. Now we must improve our system to ensure a better educational experience for all learners in a rapidly changing world – one that will result in more students reaching higher levels of learning, and better equipped to succeed beyond high school.

The NHDOE and the districts of the state will focus their efforts around four pillars of a high quality education system:

- Standards, Assessments and Instruction
- Data Collection and Use
- Teacher and Leader Effectiveness and Evaluation
- Transforming Struggling Schools

Through these pillars the state is committed to the following goals:



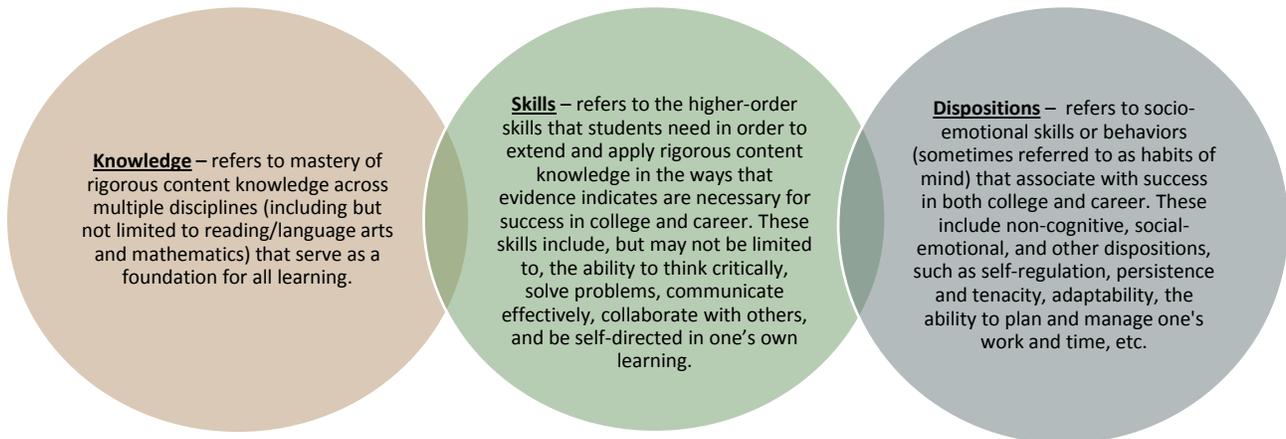
The NHDOE believes that for too many years, New Hampshire, along with every other state, has had to operate pursuant to an outdated federal education law that does not provide a rational accountability structure or the focused and meaningful supports our schools need. A request to the U.S. Department of Education to waive certain aspects of ESEA would allow for a more coherent overall approach thereby creating the opportunity for achieving dramatic improvements in student performance.

The state's current situation creates unnecessary complexity and confusion for New Hampshire schools, as evidenced by the current accountability structures being used. In 2009, the legislature of the State of New Hampshire passed SB180, a bill establishing an accountability system to ensure students receive the opportunity for an adequate education. The legislation specified a two-part accountability system: one part is input-based and the second part is performance-based. The input based component assesses whether a school provides the necessary curriculum for an adequate education and sets appropriate expectations for completion of the academic program. The performance-based component assesses adequacy based on the school's demonstration of student achievement, engagement and persistence to graduation. However, in addition to these two, the state is also required to comply with the federal accountability system that does not support either the input-based or proficiency-based components specified by state law. It is time to harmonize the federal and state systems into a single cohesive and meaningful approach.

This document is only a concept paper. Thus it contains only initial thoughts to drive further conversations and development. NHDOE hopes that these ideas will serve as a starting point for deeper engagement and conversations that will take place this summer. From this process will emerge a more specific set of strategies and plans that will guide our work and form the basis for a waiver application. By applying for the federal waiver, the NHDOE believes that the state will be able to move toward a system that is better for all students – a system that has a support orientation instead of a compliance orientation. While a number of the ideas contained in this paper could be implemented without a waiver, the added flexibility and relief from mandates that results from the receipt of a waiver will allow the state to more quickly reach its goal. In the end, it will be the students of New Hampshire that benefit from a better, more rigorous, more innovative, more meaningful education that prepares them for success in college and careers.

## A New Theory of Action and Change

New Hampshire believes that all students must be college and career ready by the time they complete high school. This means not only meeting the content knowledge expectations of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts and Math, but also demonstrating necessary college- and career-ready knowledge, skills and dispositions<sup>1</sup>. Our system must show that students are advancing not just by demonstrating growth in learning, but by demonstrating competency.



Competency education like this starts with a system of college- and career –ready standards implemented through a comprehensive and highly effective system of educator, school, and district supports. The system we envision will be based on the idea that all actors – teachers, leaders and the community – are engaged and share the intention and desire to help every student reach proficiency – a theory of positive intent. We reject the idea of a deficit model where schools and districts are identified as failing and “shaming by naming” is used as a method to increase student achievement. Ours will be a system where networks of educators and communities of learners will work on an “improvement-to-innovation” continuum to advance their practice and better support student learning while seeding transformation and the future of learning for New Hampshire students. *Figure 1* below illustrates this improvement to innovation continuum.

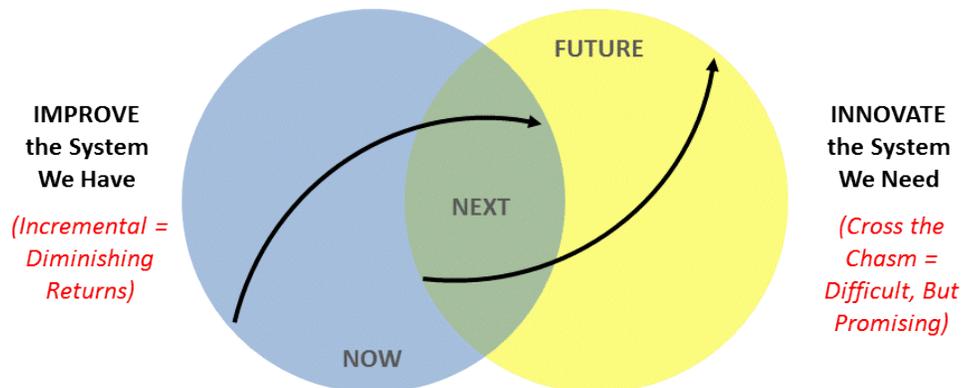


FIGURE 1- IMPROVEMENT TO INNOVATION CONTINUUM

Therefore, in New Hampshire:



- ▶ All graduating students will demonstrate college and/or career readiness based on an expanded definition of rigorous content and knowledge, adaptive skills, and critical dispositions by 2017. The state will also define ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) that move beyond an accountability system based on a pure status model to one that eventually and fully includes a competency-based learning model.
- ▶ The state will adopt a balanced system of assessments (formative, interim, and summative) to assess student competency along learning progressions. Performance-based assessments will be administered when students are ready to demonstrate competency as opposed to waiting for an arbitrary date on a calendar.
- ▶ The state will set its ambitious annual yearly objectives (AMOs) with the intent of closing the gap of achievement in every subgroup by 50 percent by 2017 based on multiple measures.
- ▶ The state will provide a broad set of supports through a network strategy so that educators will be engaged in continuous, research-based improvement processes and support and cutting-edge, innovative approaches that rethink the structure of school practice and use of technology.
- ▶ The state will implement an educator effectiveness system connected to student performance, including competency attainment. It will address areas of preparation, selection, induction, mentoring and evaluation.

This new theory of change identifies areas of need and builds capacity for implementing the changes required to better meet the learning needs of all students, thereby becoming the newest chapter in the strong educational history of New Hampshire.

## Principle 1: College and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students

NHDOE is committed to setting high expectations for what students must know and be able to do. NHDOE is a leading member of the Innovation Lab Network (ILN – coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers) and is primed to advance the work of the ILN around competency-based approaches to education. New Hampshire is prepared to provide a framework for schools to require their students to achieve proficiency of rigorous content knowledge and to demonstrate the ability to effectively integrate and apply knowledge in diverse environments within and across disciplines. NHDOE policy requiring all high school courses to be aligned to course-level competencies is one step the state has already taken to foster new practices of assessment that promote and evaluate deeper levels of understanding of important academic content, skills, and dispositions.

### *Adopting and Transitioning to College- and Career-Ready Standards*

The New Hampshire State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in July 2010. Since its adoption, the state has provided multiple awareness meetings and professional development opportunities for educator engagement. To ensure consistency in messaging and to encourage a seamless transition, NHDOE developed an [implementation framework](#) (linked here) to help guide the work around the state, as well as efforts within districts and schools. The next step for the state will be to focus its implementation efforts on providing distinct and focused learning opportunities for the specific needs of district and school leaders, teachers, parents and students.

In addition to the foundation CCSS provides, New Hampshire has expanded the definition, or rather dimensions, of college and career readiness to include the knowledge, skills and dispositions students need to succeed beyond high school. Readiness requires more than students reaching higher levels of learning (as specified by the content standards).

New Hampshire’s dimensional elements of college and career readiness serve as a guidepost for dramatic reforms in education policy and practice. They represent the belief that we must deliver on the development of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills for all students as part of a moral, economic, and civic imperative to reduce inequities and advance excellence.<sup>ii</sup>

College and career ready means that students graduate from high school prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary opportunities – whether college or career – *without need for remediation.*

- Students should graduate fully prepared to pursue the college and career *options of their choice.*
- *College ready* refers to the full range of programs leading to valuable, recognized degrees, including community colleges and four-year colleges.
- *Career ready* refers to employment opportunities with meaningful opportunities for advancement as well as career training programs that offer technical certification or other marketable skills.
- Evidence and experience indicate that the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and career are *greatly similar*, and that all graduates will need some form of postsecondary education or training to succeed during their careers.

To be college and career ready, students must graduate with the *knowledge, skills, and dispositions* necessary to succeed. These are the kinds of *deeper learning outcomes* that are at the heart of being college and career ready.

- Knowledge, skills and dispositions are mutually reinforcing, and not contradictory. That is, evidence and experience confirm that education that advances application of knowledge through skills is more likely to result in student competency of the underlying, rigorous content knowledge.
- The knowledge, skills and dispositions have concrete meaning and can be expressly taught, learned, and measured. This will require multiple, robust measures of evaluation and assessment.
- This same set of knowledge, skills and dispositions is also vital for student success in terms of citizenship, in addition to college and career readiness, including the ability to contribute and succeed in our increasingly diverse, democratic, global society.

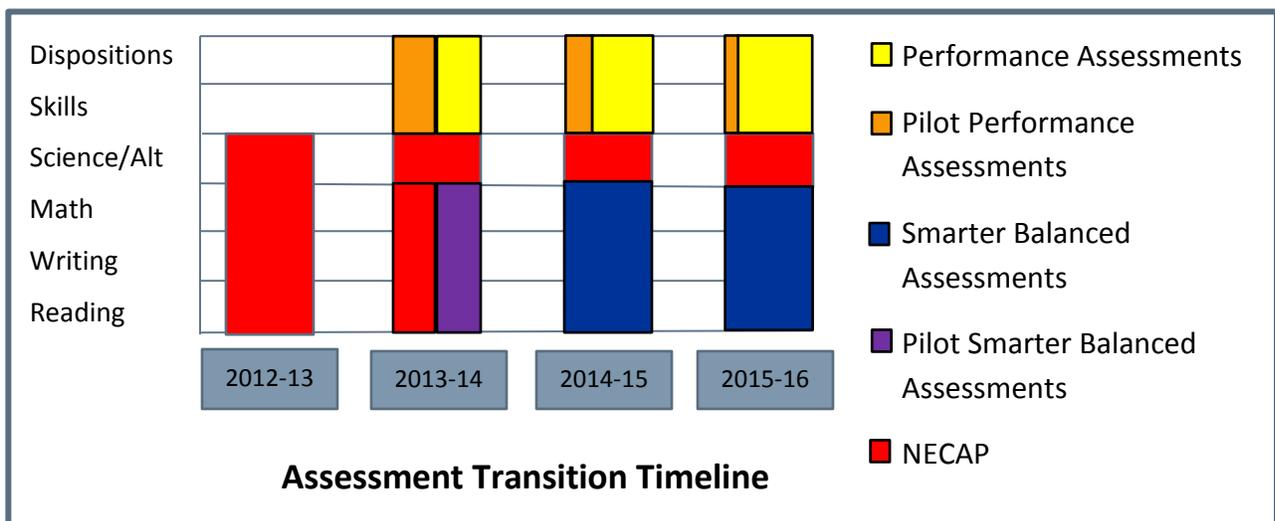
## Developing and Administering Assessments that Measure Student Growth, Skills and Dispositions

In the context of the CCSS, and New Hampshire’s dimension of college and career readiness, the state needs ways to measure whether students are meeting expectations and reaching academic achievement goals. By 2015, the NHDOE is committed to creating a balanced and robust system of assessments (formative, interim and summative) focused on personalized learning that will evaluate students’ competencies over rigorous academic content, adaptive skills, and critical dispositions. One component of this system will be the assessments being developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), for which New Hampshire is a governing state. The state is currently working with SBAC and partner states to investigate how the Smarter Balanced assessments might also be used in a competency-based instructional model and graduation system.

Another component of the state’s system will include performance assessments that will be designed in partnership with the Center for Collaborative Education and the National Center for Assessment. These assessments go beyond the assessment of academic content and will allow schools to evaluate a student’s readiness through deeper diagnostics of their skills and dispositions. The state will work with K-12 educators to develop a series of rubrics to identify competency definitions and levels for knowledge, skills and dispositions to assure comparability across school districts. Since these broad tasks can be demonstrated in numerous ways, the state will work with districts to create both common and unique assessment tasks that can be used by students, as well as guidance for students to create unique learning experiences that can be assessed using these rubrics.

Performance assessments are defined as multi-step, complex activities with clear criteria, expectations, and processes that enable students to **interact with meaningful content** and that measure how well a student **transfers knowledge** and **applies complex skills** to create or refine an original product and/or solution.

Finally, the state will continue to offer the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) assessment for both science and alternative assessments. The state’s assessment system will also balance local control with state-wide accountability and comparability. The chart below shows the expected timeline to develop and implement the assessment system. The SBAC and performance assessments will begin with pilot sites before going to full scale.



## Principle 2: State Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support

When fully implemented, New Hampshire's new assessment system will serve as a foundation for strong teacher, school and student accountability systems that will allow the state to realize its new Theory of Action. The accountability system will meet federal requirements and also help promote and incentivize continued improvement of instruction and assessment. The accountability system will be designed with the goal of moving away from branding schools through a negative and unproductive process, and moving toward a process of promoting improvement and innovation. It will move beyond a pure status model to one that includes measures of growth and eventually proficiency of learning. The rich performance tasks that will be developed in performance-based assessments can help support educator evaluation systems by providing a means of documenting student learning that is attributable to an individual teachers or groups of teachers. Similarly, student performance assessment results will be a more accurate key component of school accountability in New Hampshire and will serve as a tool to differentiate and disseminate recognition and support.

### *Implementing a Differentiated Accountability System with Ambitious and Achievable Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)*

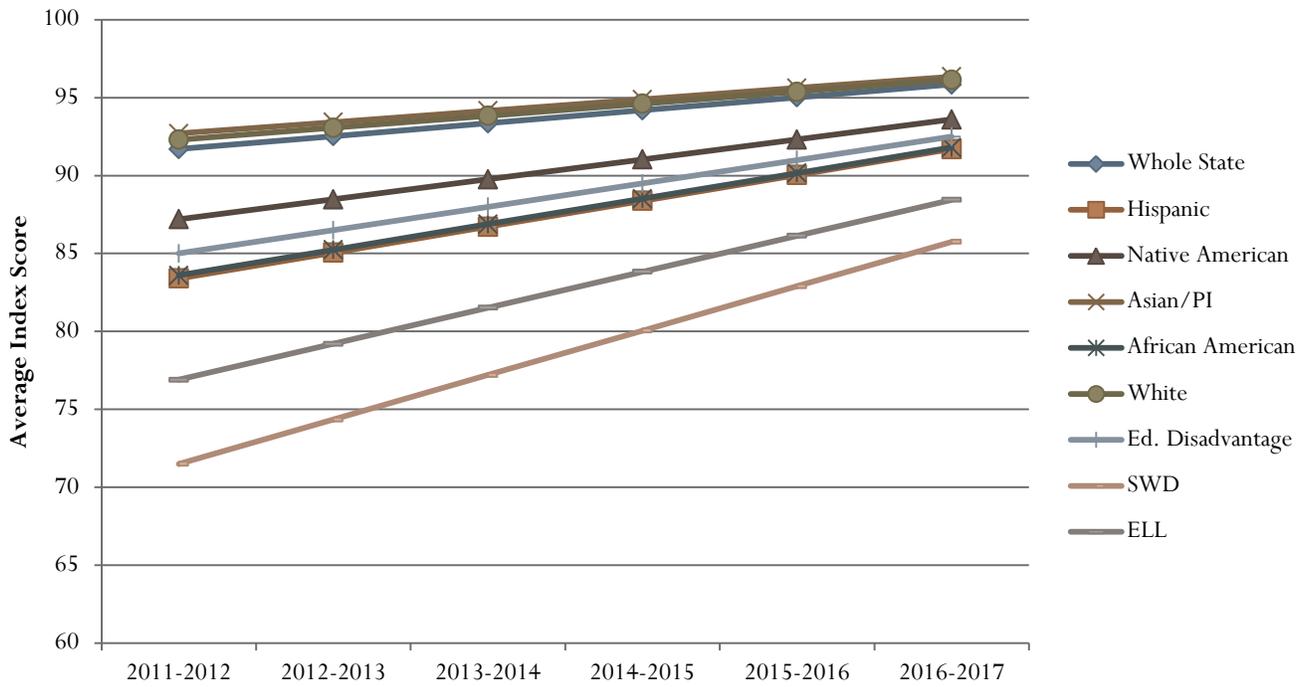
New Hampshire is committed to improving educational outcomes for **all** students, but recognizes that the current requirements of ESEA create obstacles to focusing on the schools and districts needing the greatest assistance. The state will take advantage of the opportunity afforded by USED to define and use more realistic AMOs. These will allow the state to differentiate levels of support for schools by building networks of technical assistance, knowledge sharing and innovation.

The federal flexibility waiver offers three options for redefining the states AMO determinations. New Hampshire will choose an option which allows the state to increase targets in annual equal increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the "all students" group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years.

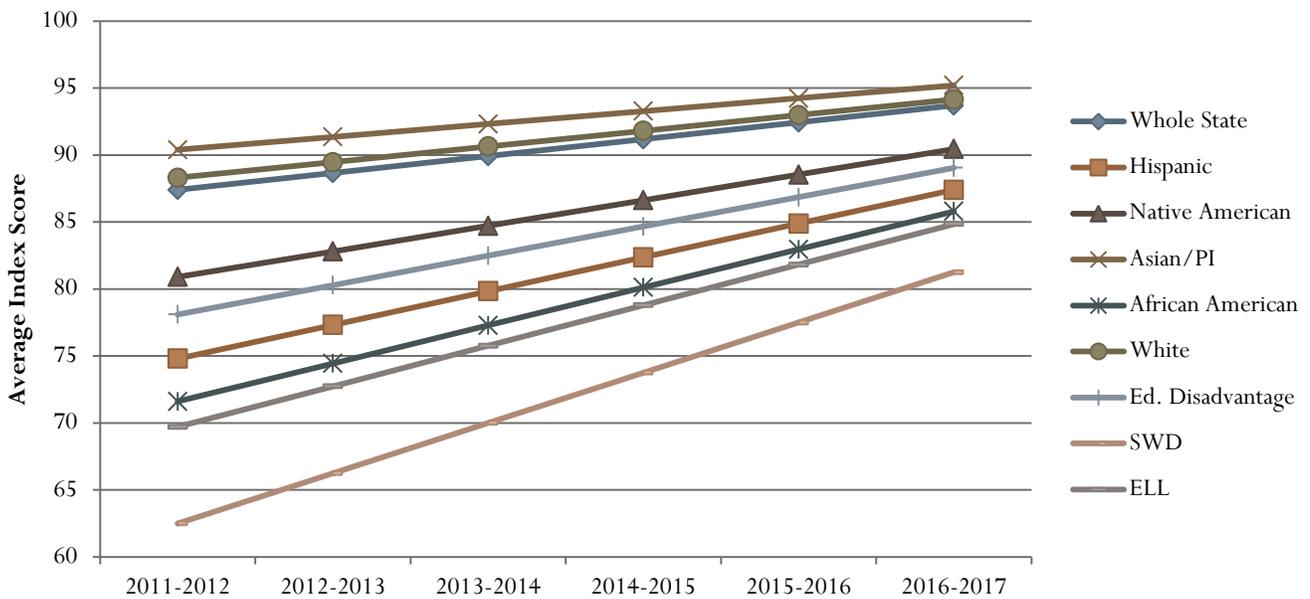
The state will initially define its AMOs based on the NECAP results now and for the next year. However, it is the state's intention to reflect the multiple proficiency assessments it will develop – as well as the SBAC assessment – as those measures go into place. Throughout the summer of 2012, the state will work with stakeholder groups to determine the best way to include skills and dispositions into this new AMO determination.

The two charts on the following page demonstrate using the state's current NECAP summative assessment performance by subgroup in Reading and Math.

**Principle 2, Option A: Elementary-Middle Schools AMO Calculations Based on  
NECAP Reading Index Scores**



**Principle 2, Option A: Elementary-Middle Schools AMO Calculations Based on  
NECAP Math Index Scores**



### *Identification and Support for Priority, Focus and Reward Schools*

The NH DOE will continue to identify its lowest five percent *priority schools* and its additional 10 percent *focus schools* in the same manner as it has in the past few years. All available student achievement data for the past four years– using NECAP – for the “all students” group is reviewed for each school annually. The raw student achievement data for the state’s reading and mathematics assessments is converted to a 100-point index score. The index scores in each content area for the “all students” group are added together for each school in order to produce an annual combined score. The annual combined scores are then totaled to produce a cumulative achievement score for each school.

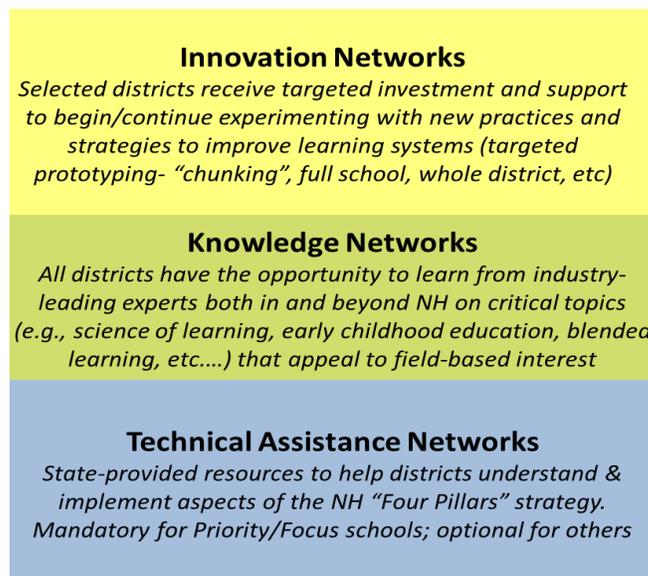
Schools are ranked in order from lowest to highest on the basis of the cumulative achievement score. Those at the top of the rank-ordered list are determined to be the state’s persistently lowest-achieving schools. The top five percent will be considered the state’s priority schools and the next 10 percent will be considered the state’s focus schools.

Priority and focus schools will receive intensive support and guidance from the NHDOE through its technical assistance networks (see next section). The details of this support, along with the determination and recognition of reward schools will be developed throughout the summer of 2012.

### *Developing Networks of Support and Recognition*

New Hampshire is committed to implementing a new way of supporting its districts and schools. Shifting from a compliance orientation to a support orientation, NHDOE is reorganizing its structure, staffing and resources to better meet the needs of districts. In order to realize this shift, NHDOE is moving to a network structure of supports, aligned with the state’s Theory of Action but equally responsive to the needs and interests of districts and schools. This approach is based on the state’s recognition of a continuum from improvement to innovation, with the need to engage all districts and schools in the necessary work of continuous improvement while at the same time seeding the transformation of structures, practices and technology tools, which will yield models that are more personalized, rigorous and ultimately cost-effective.

The graphic below illustrates a comprehensive network strategy:



This network strategy will build capacity and provide supports for all schools and districts. Under this approach:

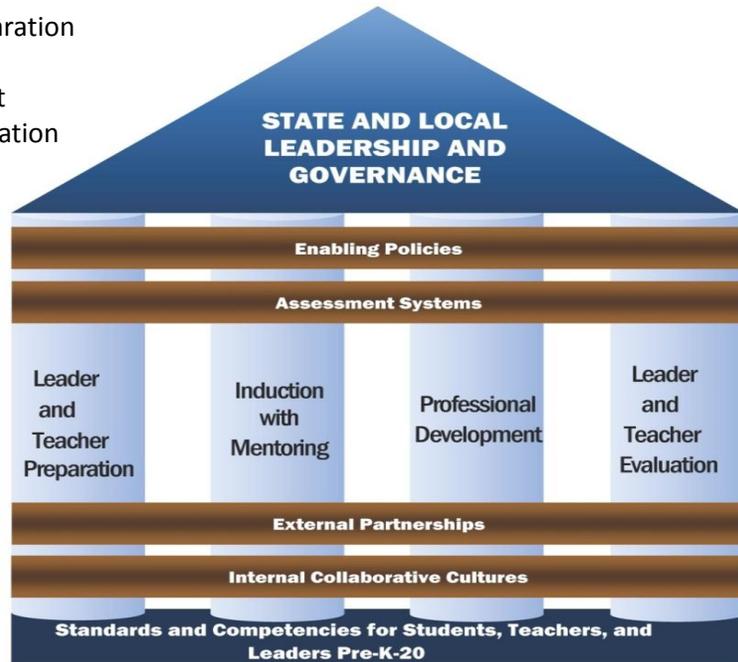
- **Technical Assistance Networks** will focus on continuous improvement. These networks will convene with regularity and be concentrated in 5 geographic regions of the state (North Country, Lakes, South West, South Central, Seacoast). Sample topics for these networks will include: Common Core Instructional Strategies, Common Core Implementation, Competency-based Grading & Assessment, Use of Data to Drive Continuous Improvement, Teacher/Leader Evaluation & Effectiveness, Literacy Across the Curriculum, Developing and Supporting Authentic Assessment, etc.
- **Knowledge Networks** will provide a range of stakeholders throughout the state with access to information based on needs and interests. These “networks” will be informal and will include tools such as blogs, listservs, webinars, conferences, seminars, and symposia, with a goal of encouraging intellectual discourse and attracting national and international thinkers to the Granite State. Work from both the Technical Assistance and Innovation networks can bubble up to the Knowledge Networks as a way to share emerging practice, new knowledge or dialogue about open questions. Sample topics for these networks include: Personalization Technologies, Early Childhood Education and the K12 System, Next Generation Learning, Cultural Shift to a Competency-based System, Developing Student Voice, Transdisciplinary Learning, Key Dispositions of Successful Students, etc.
- **Innovation Networks** are non-geographic opportunities for colleagues from around the state to come together around areas of shared interest with a problem-solving orientation in service of transforming the existing educational model by building alternative structures, practices and tools. These networks will be structured as limited time engagements with up-front facilitation by content & subject specific experts to develop ideas that can be rapidly prototyped in the classrooms, schools and districts. Sample topics may include: Mass Customization/Personalized Learning, Innovative Use of Time, Innovative Use of Space, Performance-based Data Management, New School Models, etc.

### Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

The NHDOE – in partnership with educators and other stakeholders – are currently involved in developing a Comprehensive System of Educator Effectiveness characterized by four pillars:

- ▶ Leader and Teacher Preparation
- ▶ Induction with Mentoring
- ▶ Professional Development
- ▶ Leader and Teacher Evaluation

As the system has been conceptualized and constructed, state and local leaders have been diligently working over the last two years on developing and implementing policies, assessment systems, external partnerships (in-state, regional, and national), and internal collaborative cultures within schools and districts.



The NHDOE has undertaken a comprehensive process to develop model evaluation systems for both principals and teachers. This process has included over 100 stakeholders serving as thought partners on task forces and committees and is ongoing with teams meeting currently. The following provides a snapshot of the work conducted.

#### Principal Evaluation and Support Systems

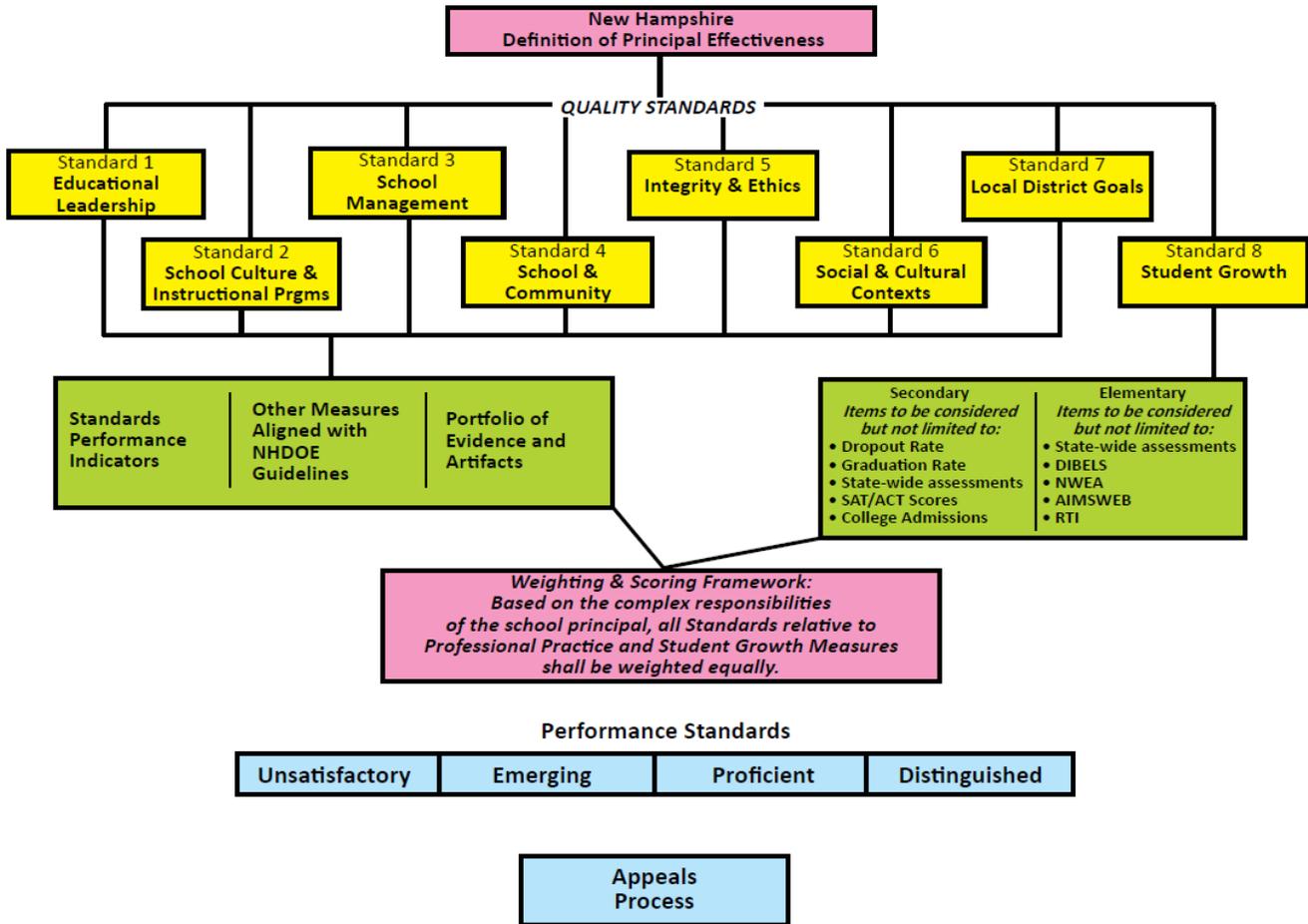
The New Hampshire Association of School Principals established a Principal Effectiveness and Evaluation Task Force to make recommendation on how principals should be evaluated. Their task was to:

- Provide a common definition of effective leadership at the principal level;
- Identify frameworks that are researched-based that might be used for fair and equitable evaluation processes; and to
- Develop a set of recommendations that will lead to supporting a framework for preparing, evaluating and supporting principals.

The Task Force defined effective principals as those who:

*...promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community. An effective principal promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. Principals are educational leaders who promote the success of all students by collaborating with all families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.*

The Principal Task Force recommended nine procedures and developed a framework for principal evaluations based on the ISSLC Standards.



### Teacher Evaluation and Support Systems

Established in 2010 to build a foundation for the development of a system to support effective teaching in New Hampshire, the NH Task Force on Effective Teaching (Phase I) was comprised of sixty representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups. The 2011 [Phase I Report](#) (linked here) contains details from this effort, including a common definition of effective teaching for all schools.

*Effective teachers are those that focus relentlessly on the achievement of their learners. They are also deeply committed to the success of all learners. Research has shown that teacher’s knowledge and skills are in key areas – the learner and learning, content knowledge, instructional practice, professional responsibilities and dispositions – contribute, in varying degrees to student growth and achievement.*

The Task Force also (please see [Phase I Report](#)):

1. Identified different teaching frameworks that are research-based and are critical components to a fair and equitable teaching evaluation process;
2. Developed a system of preparation, professional development, and continuous advancement of teachers to impact student learning; and
3. Developed a set of recommendations that will lead to a statewide system of teacher effectiveness.

The Phase II Task Force on Effective Teaching is currently active and is charged with carrying out the recommendations put forth in the *Phase I Report*. The Phase II Task Force is comprised of over 40 key education stakeholders, including teachers, principals, superintendents, higher education representatives, and key union and association representatives. The Task Force is supported by the NHDOE, the Center for Assessment, and the New England Comprehensive Center.

### Guiding Principles

The primary purpose of the state model system is to maximize student learning and its development was guided by shared design principles. The following are highlights of some of the principles supporting this primary purpose.

1. High quality teachers are critical for fostering student learning. Therefore, the system is designed to maximize educator development by providing specific feedback that can be used to improve teaching quality.
2. Local evaluation systems must be designed collaboratively among teachers, leaders, and other key stakeholders such as parent and students as appropriate.
3. The state model system and all local systems will be comprehensive and, to the maximum extent possible, research-based.
4. The effectiveness rating of each educator will be based on multiple measures of teaching practice and student outcomes including using multiple years of data when available, especially for measures of student learning.
5. The model system is designed to be internally coherent and also compliment the NH Leader Evaluation System.
6. The educator evaluation system need to be seen as providing information for school principals and/or peer teams to ultimately make recommendations about each educator's effectiveness determination.

### General Evaluation Framework

The state model system contains five major components, four domains of professional practice and one domain of student performance results. Each of the domains should be weighted relatively equally, although local districts have the discretion to adjust the weighting of the domains to reflect local priorities.

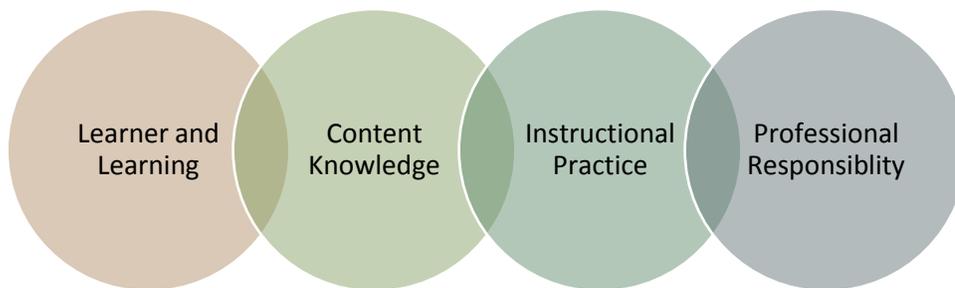
Each educator evaluation will include:

- Yearly self-reflection and goal setting
- A professional portfolio documenting key aspects of teacher practice
- Observations of practice by educational leaders and potentially peers
- Student Learning Objectives (SLO)
- Student Growth Percentiles (SGP -- if applicable)
- Shared attribution of at least part of the SLO and/or SGP results depending upon local theories of action around school improvement.

In addition to the major components listed above, *the Task Force recommends exploring the inclusion of measures of student voice and parent opinions in the evaluation of educators.*

### **Standards of Professional Practice**

The Task Force recommends that all local systems should be based on the four domains of effective teaching described in the Phase I report:



The Task Force expects that districts will use other existing frameworks (e.g., Danielson) to help specify and measure the various aspects of professional practice, but recommends that all districts must map their framework to the four dimensions from the Phase I report.

### **Use of Student Performance Results**

All teachers, whether in “tested grades and subjects” or not will be required to document student academic performance each year using Student Learning Objectives (SLO) in accordance with the SLO guidance developed by the Task Force. Student Learning Objectives is a general approach (also called Student Growth Objectives or Student Learning Evidence) whereby educators establish important goals for individual or groups of students (in conjunction with peers and administrators) and then evaluate the extent to which the goals have been achieved.

The NHDOE will produce Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) results documenting the individual student and aggregate growth for students based on state test data. These results will be aggregated according to “teacher of record” rules and for the whole school. Further, results will be disaggregated according to identifiable student groups in the school. These results, based on NECAP and eventually Smarter Balanced assessments, using the SGP model, will be incorporated into teachers’ evaluations either using

a shared or individual attribution framework. Both SGP and SLO analyses will produce results in three classifications of performance, to the extent possible, such as: high, typical/average, and low.

### **Coherence**

The state model is designed to maximize coherence among the various aspects of the system. In particular, the Task Force wants to ensure that the four domains of teaching practice and student performance results are seen as integral parts of a comprehensive system. For example, this means that, to the extent possible, observations of teaching performance should be connected to measures of student performance (via SLOs) as a way to triangulate information. Similarly, the quality and usefulness of student performance measures should be incentivized and recognized as part of the specific domains of teaching practice.

### **Frequency of Evaluation**

The frequency of summative evaluation will be tied to educators' length of time teaching and previous evaluation rating. Highly effective, experienced teachers will undergo a summative evaluation at least once every three years, while new and/or teachers previously rated ineffective will be evaluated every year. All teachers, however, will be expected to receive formative feedback and participate in SLOs and the professional portfolio process each year.

### **Consequences and Supports**

The system has been designed to ensure that teachers with low evaluation ratings receive support in order to improve their teaching performance. If the performance of teachers on a continuing contract, as reflected in the evaluation scores, was low for a second year, the level of support should be intensified for at least another year.

At the other end of the continuum, teachers with exemplary performance as demonstrated by the evaluation ratings will be recognized in ways determined by the local district. This recognition may include monetary rewards, but more likely will include recognition and taking on additional responsibilities (e.g., mentoring, serving as evaluators) and perhaps additional flexibility from other requirements.

### **Implementation**

Implementation will begin in the 2012-2013 academic year with volunteer districts and the School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools. The volunteer districts will be considered part of the first pilot phase. The second year of piloting will occur in 2013-2014 and will include the volunteer districts from the 2012-2013 as well as new volunteer districts. All districts will be expected to implement the state model system or locally aligned system by the 2014-2015 school year.

## Principle 4: Reducing Duplication and Unnecessary Burden

If the NHDOE determines to move forward with the federal flexibility waiver, the state will use the process of designing the request and its current reorganization efforts to focus on reducing reporting and other burdens for districts. A stakeholder team will be brought together this summer to assist the NHDOE in determining the necessary and desired action steps for Principle 4. Ultimately, it is our goal that this process yields a more efficient, more effective organization.

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<sup>i</sup> CCSSO Innovation Lab Network, College and Career Readiness Task Force. Draft *Framework for Defining College and Career Readiness*. May 2012

<sup>ii</sup> CCSSO Innovation Lab Network, College and Career Readiness Task Force. Draft *Framework for Defining College and Career Readiness*. May 2012