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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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**Task Force to Develop a Performance-Based School Accountability System
 January 29, 2010, 9:00 am, Department of Education Board Room**

Next Meeting: February 19, 2010 9 am – 12 pm

Attending:

X	Virginia Barry, Ph.D.	Commissioner of Education
X	Brian Cochrane	Director of Assessment and Accountability Nashua School District
X	Paul Couture	Principal, Stevens High School, Claremont
X	Jerome Frew	Superintendent, Kearsarge Regional School District
X	Molly Kelly	Chair, Education Committee, NH Senate
X	Daphne Kenyon	NH State Board of Education
X	Paul Leather	Director, Division of Adult Learning, NH Department of Education
X	Scott Marion	National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Dover
	Deborah McNeish	Principal, Conant/Rumford School, Concord, NH
X	Judith Fillion	Director, Division of Program Support, NH Department of Education
X	Edward Murdough	Bureau of School Approval
X	Kathleen Murphy	Director, Division of Instruction, NH Department of Education
X	Emma Rous	Chair, Education Committee, NH House of Representatives
X	Vincent Spiotti	Bethlehem School Board, Bethlehem, NH
X	Deborah Wiswell	Bureau of Accountability, Curriculum and School Improvement, Division of Instruction, NH Department of Education

Guests

Representative Franklin Gould, NH House, Lebanon, NH
 Dean Michener, Executive Director, NH School Boards Association
 Karen Laba, New England Comprehensive Center (NECC), RMC Research, Portsmouth, NH

NOTES:

1. Meeting convened at 9:00. Deb Wiswell invited comments reflecting on past conversations.

Rep. Emma Rous mentioned that she and others in the legislature expected there to be an incentive component to the system to encourage a focus on problem solving tasks and real-life experiences. Kathleen Murphy noted that schools such as Souhegan, Coe Brown, Bow, and others use student exhibitions or 'recitals' and other performances as a measure of student achievement. Since the law allows the committee to make recommendations, it's possible to incorporate suggestions to build more incentives into the performance based system.

Members added that portfolios as observed during site visits are used in elementary schools more commonly. Perhaps the committee or the Department can offer recommendations on ways to use those as additional measures of performance.

Educators should consider use of "multiple measures" as a better way to get a full picture of learning. Participants expressed a hope that accountability can move away from only paper and pencil tests toward more customized, local assessments.

Jerry Frew commented that he would encourage the task force to reflect the spirit of local control and flexibility in its recommendations.

Brian Cochrane described the kind of engagement that can emerge from a clear focus on good quality assessments of student learning. Nashua's experience of building teacher capacity to develop and score interim/ benchmark assessments and the resulting changes in student learning are evidence of the positive impact assessment can have. The gains in teacher enthusiasm when the assessment really measures what students know and are able to do correlate with and perhaps enable gains in student achievement.

Deb expressed appreciation to Rep. Gould for his comments submitted before this meeting. She reiterated the roles of the two task forces – the AYPTF charged with addressing the adequacy of 'inputs' and this task force charged with crafting a system to measure the outputs or performance results that reflect adequacy. She expressed that the ideal of a comprehensive assessment system that measures the impact of the education system beyond the level of 'adequacy' is desirable, but beyond the capacity of this task force at this point in time.

2. Ed Murdough presented an overview of the site visits conducted as part of the school approval process. (PPT slides)
 - Highlights of existing school visits:
 - target 10 schools per year; select specific standards to look at across all schools;
 - disaggregated district responsibilities from school responsibilities within the school standards
 - format includes 5 DOE staff, content area experts on targeted standards included
 - preview materials submitted before site visit; meet with key school staff, discussions with students, showcase events as needed, exit report to key staff, written report within two weeks

In light of SB180, enacted changes to meet these expectations for the site visit process (RSA 193-E-3-b,III, (f))

- 10% schools annually (48 schools)
- review 12 specified standards
- combine with other visits if feasible
- corroborate annual input based system self-reports

Comment: Scott Marion expressed concerns about doing too many things in one site visit, that there are challenges associated with that. It may happen that none of the desired outcomes are achieved well if too many outcomes are attempted.

Changes implemented starting SY 09-10 to pilot a protocol that could meet the SB180 desired outcomes --

- selected high schools and several of their feeder schools in K-12 systems; (rationale – previously had identified that transitions between elementary to middle to high schools are often problematic)
- established a plan to start with visits to 20 schools in 09-10, gradually increase to the required 10% (48) by SY 2012-2013
- staff from DOE and peer reviewers from other SAUs serve on the site visit team
- protocol includes interviews with teachers and principals; review the program of studies, examine syllabi and lesson plans (as defined for the “input” system)

During this test year, Ed’s office deliberately picked the ‘complicated’ situations to enable the team to work through the protocol, identify challenges and revise before full implementation. Schools for 09-10 include: Kennett HS (done), Farmington HS (done), Keene HS (March/ April), Woodsville HS (May). Ed offered a graphic presentation of Kennett HS and feeder schools and towns, described the outlines of the visit schedule. The report has been completed. The visit found what they expected to find, no surprises.

Challenges using the new format –

- with a small number of people on the team, individuals may need to examine information not in their area of expertise; it may be possible to recruit retired teachers, or peers who may be content knowledgeable across areas to serve on a team during the year
- the new schedule limits interaction with students because the number of standards to be examined and evidence corroborated is expanded under SB 180.

Ed offered some lessons learned from the revised site visit process –

- (a) it requires a lot of work to put together, coordinate, schedule, these visits
- (b) there is no trouble finding people, but an effort to pull them together, to train and prepare them for the visit;
- (c) missed contact with students;
- (d) there was some disruption taking teachers out of class for interviews;

Kathleen Murphy reminded that there is a history with this version of site visits that have accountability stakes attached --- the Dept. used a similar approach for charter school

visits last year, using peers from the field, and then presented a report to the State Board on the status of the charters. (The reviewers were paid).

Jerry Frew requested that the designers of the process try to coordinate with NEASC since the endeavors are very similar. While it is true that not every hs participates in NEASC, and visits only occur every 10 years, it should be possible to select schools to be visited for the upcoming year based on NEASC visit calendars.

Jerry suggested considering options to structure visits to reduce out of school time for peer reviewers such as the NEASC approach which includes starting on a Sunday. Also a Sunday start allows time to meet with parents, train staff, review student work.

Ed reiterated that the major concern with the new process is the required level of effort. At present, there is insufficient department capacity to do 48 visits; as more visits are required, it may be harder to find sufficient people. The unanswered question remains, what does the Department do when issues are discovered? At present, there is a three year time frame for schools to remedy deficiencies uncovered in the school approval process. For example, the Department will need to create guidance on "what counts" for course credit and other issues. The visit in a sense seems to verify that issues exist, but the site visit doesn't create a way to resolve the issue.

Ed offered a central question to be considered in the design of the adequacy system: **If the process is not useful to schools, then it may not be work worth doing.** The system must provide useful feedback to schools that can guide their resolution of deficiencies that are identified.

One challenge that has been somewhat resolved is the recommendation in the legislation to integrate the adequacy site visit with other DOE visits. From an investigation within the Department, staff has learned that other site visits have very narrow purposes and can't be expanded or absorbed to accommodate the adequacy requirements.

Discussion of refinements to other elements of the site visit process:

- NEAS allows schools to responding to factual accuracy in a draft of the report before it is finalized; this should be considered part of the adequacy site visit process
- the report format is a place where efficiencies can be found; some report formats are clearer and more concise than others; examine other examples from the field.

Paul Leather commented that RI is going to adopt a "walk through" protocol for accountability purposes. While it may not fit NH needs at the present, it may be helpful to discuss and clarify its usefulness for NH schools. Deb will follow up with Paul to get more information.

Paul Couture, Claremont HS Principal, was visited under the old system and invited by Ed to comment. He found the school approval visit more policy focused than instruction focused. Ed's description of the "new" adequacy site visit process suggests it will have a different focus than before.

3. Deb reminded the task force that a status report is due in April to the legislature about progress in developing the adequacy system. Deb and Emma will meet to discuss what the components of the report will be. Confirm **Feb. 19** date for next meeting. March 26 not suitable, moved to **April 2, 9 am – 12 n.**
4. Scott Marion presented a synthesis of previous discussions to lay out a starting framework for the performance-based adequacy accountability system. (ppt slides posted separately)

Highlights:

-- two LEVEL system

Level 1 = common state defined indicators

Level 2 = locally defined indicators, measures

-- Level 1 small set of common indicators, consistently applied, unarguable,

K-8 = inclusion factors, status measures, growth, gap analyses

HS = inclusion, status, gap, postsecondary indicators (unable to do growth for hs currently; insufficient data)

Highlights of discussion/ presentation of LEVEL 1 Indicators --

VIP -- state already collects and reports this data

-- Inclusion indicators – level of participation in assessments (currently 95%);

Jerry asked for a rationale for 95% (or any number) and described the importance to have agreement on reasons for whatever number;

Scott explained that 95% comes from the feds now; he offered an example how different definitions of participation can make a difference in interpreting NAEP results, in one example due to different state rules on who is excluded from assessments;

-- attendance/ truancy indicator would include the percent of students absent fewer than 15 days for example; committee will have to decide what value is “good enough” (Paul C reminded us later that we need to define carefully how attendance is taken and reported in high schools (i.e. block schedules present different issues))

-- Achievement factors (both K-8 and HS) – include

status by weighted average of index scores;

gaps using effect size differences (Scott’s addition); example for those FRL and not; maybe only reading and math, or include writing and science;

Discussion of “privacy” considerations for free and reduced lunch groups; Scott offered an example of Utah’s “super subgroup” designation; important consideration that other states may have resolved; can research

Growth factors (K-8) – growth percentiles (NECAP data); reading and math only

because limited data in other subject tests; AYP task force looking at the issues associated with the growth percentile method

-- Postsecondary factors (hs only):

grad rate,

dropout rate,

others?

Scott’s recommendation for Level 1 –

- aggregate data along "classes" of indicators (i.e., status, growth, postsecondary); aggregate across major classifications; then decide YES or NO on adequacy looking across all categories

Scott proposed an outline for Level Two of performance indicators – Locally determined indicators and measures

- allow a limited set of district or school- determined goals, targets and indicators (school/ district can have many internally, but only the highest priority would be included in this system)
- school results would count in the performance based accountability system

Scott cautioned to keep in mind that if the schools don't get any benefit from the accountability system, the task force will have not met its purpose.

Discussion of Level 2 –

- Department would need to provide guidance for how locals establish goals and targets;

For example, principles for establishing acceptable goals and target include that they must be measurable; targets must extend over several years but measurable yearly;

The Task Force can specify whether goals are academic only, or allow a mix of socio-emotional indicators, such as those associated with the Follow the Child initiative. Alternatively, the Task Force could leave the goals and targets open ended, allowing any goal a school chooses.

Concern raised that if the Department doesn't provide some sort of guidelines or framework, schools might have a tendency to avoid including goals that are difficult to achieve.

Q: Will the Department create a menu of goals so schools won't be able to submit goals they've already achieved, or that reflect easy to achieve targets?

Scott: The Department will need to create guidance on the development of credible goals. As Rep. Rous expressed at the start of the meeting, one outcome of this process was hoped to be to "incentivize" schools to reach toward the highest form of a local comprehensive assessment system, or to undertake improvement planning that incorporates continuous improvement targets. Paul Leather suggested that establishing Level 2 goals and targets could be a driver for high level change as awareness increases about the uses of assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning.

Scott presented a proposed requirement to require schools to justify the goals they define by asking schools to present a rationale for their choice. He proposed that the rationale be constructed in light of a theory of action that outlines how the goal will be achieved in light of current status and specific strategies. Scott shared a goal and justification/ rationale and associated theory of action (see slides).

Scott continued with a discussion of how the proposed district/ school goals would be "approved" at the local level. He recommended the Task Force require

approval by district leadership and board; and also require the LEA to publish its goals, targets, indicators, and results. Decision: would DOE have to approve the goals or only the process through which the goals were established?. One idea is to incorporate verification into the site visit.

Jerry Frew raised a question whether the Department has the capacity to approve goals. Taking on this responsibility could set up a contentious situation between the Department and the school. Perhaps the Department should consider regulating only the process by which the goal is established. Brian Cochrane agreed with Jerry's point, and suggested "review and comment on" to replace "approve" in this aspect of the system. Could also use existing groups to peer review others' goals, like AYP task force or the DINI (district in need of improvement) coordinators.

Deb commented that Jerry's idea fits with the original thought that creating its own goals would allow a school or district to "shine" and might have the effect of leading to a richer educational system. Writing unique goals will require more work at the school level, but it could, in the end, be used to distinguish good schools from great ones. Emma predicted most schools will "pass" adequacy without having to worry about the performance criteria, so including them in the system would provide an inspiration to demonstrate exceeding the minimum.

Kathleen sees this as an opportunity to encourage schools and districts to align goals across multiple plans already required. Very helpful in the "school improvement" world.

Vincent Spiotti expressed a concerns about whether the schools are selecting the 'right' goals and whether the Department will have the capacity to help guide that decision at the school level. Currently the school improvement team (Dept.) is working with the struggling schools intensively, but does not have the capacity to work with others.

Discussion of what is required and what is optional. Law requires schools to submit both Input and Performance components of the adequacy accountability system.

**Task Force can define Performance using one of several options –
All required to do Level 1, optional to do Level 2
All required to do Level 1 AND required to report Level 2 goals/
measures**

Deb reminded that the system requires weighting of the components of the performance system. Judgments about weighting can direct attention to most useful, beneficial ways that Level 2 can be carried out. Will be more formal but still "push" schools in productive ways. She commented that, per previous discussion, communication widely across the state about the system and process will be crucial.

Rep. Gould wondered what the motivation for change will be if measures are based on a test result. Tests don't measure how well schools prepare students for success after high school. He hopes this Committee's work leads to incentives for schools to move toward better service to their students.

Members raised concern that frustration will emerge if DOE can't provide sufficient guidance and feedback to schools and districts as part of this process. This will require additional resources for the Dept. or it will be done poorly.

Daphne Kenyon expressed concerns about the complexity of the system. The proposal offer three steps to attain adequacy. The description of the site visits is daunting; adding the other pieces (input and performance) is almost overwhelming. Perhaps consider phasing in Level 2 indicators, with the DOE preparing a template up front, maybe focus Level 2 on the whole child, explicitly make the goals more broad than just test scores.

Scott asked members to weigh in on question whether Level 1 or Level 2 is worth pursuing.

Paul Couture – we already have the system of data collection as described; what impact will Level 2 have on level 1? Really struggling schools like Claremont are the reason why the legislature required this system. Already have SINI, DINI plans, NEASC recommendations, professional development plan goals. These would constitute the Level 2 goals for our school. We are not likely to meet adequacy under the Level 1 indicators. It's disappointing growth can't be measured for high schools, because we believe we are producing adequate gains in our students but the data isn't there to prove it. Previously, we used Terra Nova to measure change but learned there was little correlation between that test and our standards. Our data is incomplete and inaccurate, for example for free and reduced lunch (FRL), because our students don't apply since we don't have the space in our facility to house the upperclassmen for lunch.

Paul agreed with Scott that the ultimate question is how much will Level 2 'count' in determining whether a school meets adequacy?

Brian Cochrane recommends requiring both level 1 and level 2 indicators.

Vincent: Level 2 indicators should be focused on improvement; and will require more up front guidance for districts, more structure from DOE, templates from state to show how the goals and targets should be defined.

Jerry: The state has an obligation to preserve local flexibility, and allow as many avenues as possible to demonstrate adequacy.

Commissioner Barry: It doesn't seem that all schools should be required to create level 2 indicators. It is very clear some schools are already on the right trajectory, while others are clearly not there yet. Level 2 indicators can't be just about more work, they must have meaning in the system. If Level 2 results don't

have impact on the final judgment about adequacy, it will be a mistake. Perhaps consider phasing in Level 2 to allow Level 2 guidance, templates and quality to be developed to a high degree.

To Do for Next Meeting:

1. Show how Levels 1 & 2 would integrate with other plans submitted to the Dept (e.g. school/district improvement plans).
2. Develop a template and examples showing the elements for both Level 1 and level 2 indicators.

Questions for next meeting:

How would a phase in work?

What must be reported in April and in what format?