

**Virginia M. Barry, Ph.D.**  
 Commissioner of Education  
 Tel. 603-271-3144



**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
 101 Pleasant Street  
 Concord, N.H. 03301**

**Task Force to Develop a Performance-Based School Accountability System  
 November 30, 2009, 9:30 am, Department of Education Board Room**

**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  
 Tim Kurtz, Administrator, Curriculum and Assessment, NH Department of Education  
 Karen Laba, New England Comprehensive Center, RMC Research, Portsmouth, NH

**NOTES:**

1. Deb Wiswell began the meeting inviting each member to introduce themselves. She reviewed planned dates for upcoming meetings.

Decisions: December 18 meeting will remain despite conflicts. Other dates re-confirmed: January 29, February 19, March 26.

2. Deb asked if there were questions on the minutes from the last meeting of this committee on October 2. None were presented.
3. Deb provided a brief summary of the work of the DOE AYP Task Force on the SB180 accountability system. Part of the work they provided was their judgment on the performance indicators for the Commissioner's Task Force to consider.
4. Scott Marion, Center for Assessment, presented an analysis of the conversations at the Nov. 16 DOE AYP Task Force meeting around the identified indicators, showing the median "value" of the indicator provided by the members and the variability across the responses (SD = standard deviation). Copies of Scott's slides were distributed to participants.

Scott presented definitions of key terms in the conversation: status, improvement, and growth.

Deb W shared a question she posed to Scott about the use of local assessment systems (required in legislation) as an indicator for the performance based system.

Scott summarized his response and added the comment that research shows correlation between good local assessment systems and student achievement results.

Question: Could there be more than a yes/no around local assessment systems? Scott described what was done in Wyoming, using a multi-tiered approach, where points were awarded for (a) strength of plan; (b) deployment; and (c) outcomes once sufficient data is available. This allows a more differentiated assessment of a school's performance.

Paul Leather referred to the NH requirement for competency assessments. He described the current status of school's competency systems as a "work in progress" and not fully fleshed out. He explained the validation process that is being designed and implemented. He expressed concern about their inclusion as an indicator in the performance system without consideration of their evolving development.

Senator Kelly raised concerns about adding more layers of testing onto the schools, rather than other measures of adequacy.

Jerry Frew reminded the group that the focus of the legislation is on 'adequacy' and the committee must be mindful of 'evaluating' competencies. More important from an adequacy perspective is to assess only whether they are present or not.

Jerry asked the other high school leaders present to confirm his understanding that the accreditation agency, NEASC, requires local common assessments to be part of the school's portfolio. Jerry recalled previous AYP Task Force conversations indicating the importance of aligning the requirements of state level accountability systems with others already in place, like NEASC.

Brian Cochrane offered a restatement of the committee's charge, to develop a system to validate an inference whether the school is providing the opportunity for an adequate education.

Ed Murdough suggested that the exceptions across the indicators will begin to rise to the surface once a set of measures are collected, and exceptions can be further examined on a site visit as is now done.

Scott resumed his presentation showing slides with the high value indicators and the set of indicators currently collected. Much information is currently collected though not always used for accountability purposes. Scott asked members to note their own judgments about the indicators on slides 11 and 12.

Jerry reminded that the state investment is only \$4000 of an average \$13000 cost of educating each child. Not every school has the resources to provide the degree of opportunity similar to what Nashua or Concord or Kearsarge can provide. The accountability system must allow flexibility for local districts to demonstrate they are providing the opportunity with the resources they have available.

Senator Kelly reminded that the legislation allows for meeting *either* the input or the output/ performance indicators to demonstrate adequacy. If a school provides all the inputs, they can be considered successful at providing the opportunity for adequacy. If a school does not provide all the inputs, but exceeds the performance indicators, we can say they have succeeded in providing adequate education, though we may not be able to specify a particular input associated with that success.

Frank Gould noted that the indicators on page 12 do not relate to elementary school. None of the indicators refer to the 'engagement' of students in learning, getting them to become invested in their learning process. The list of indicators appears to be more focused on the testing that shows results not the 'opportunity' provided. Deb W replied that early on, the AYP Task Force focused entirely on the input system, while this task force is charged with defining the "performance outcomes" that reasonably represent adequacy. When a draft of the input system is completed, Deb will share with this task force, hopefully at the December 18 meeting.

Daphne Kenyon agreed that narrowing the system too much is a danger. We should remain open to identifying factors that reveal engagement and the school's impact on students.

Senator Kelly asked what other states might be doing to get the measures considered important. Scott offered an example of another state looking at ways to measure the quality of instruction. Ultimately, the quality of instruction is the primary indicator for student success. However, a valid and reliable, non-corruptible system does not yet exist for doing this affordably.

Commissioner Barry reiterated the value of quality teachers and teaching at the earliest grades as key indicators of future academic success. Efforts to incorporate a vision of quality instruction for all students are included in the state's federal grant applications.

The group engaged in a discussion of the term 'adequacy' and its limiting effect on thinking about the design of the system. Considerations of "extra credit" are helpful, though not fully liberating from the specifications of the legislation, which ultimately came from the court decisions. Some suggested that, in the future, it could be possible to broaden the indicators.

Representative Rous asked confirmation of the indicators currently used to calculate AYP – graduation rate (hs); attendance rate (es, ms); NECAP scores. She reminded the group the intent of the legislation was to broaden the types of indicators beyond test scores.

Paul revisited an earlier aspect of the discussion about 'tiered' decision process mentioned by Scott. He proposed that this approach may be a solution to the dilemma of wanting more than can be required.

Scott described a possibility of reporting to the Legislature in April a multi layered system. Layer/ step one is to present a system that assesses the essential components that meet the letter of the law ('adequacy') and a second layer beyond the basics which can address the desired/ exemplary components. Comments were offered expressing approval of a presentation that would provide the legislature with the two perspectives.

5. Scott presented an overview of the concept of **growth percentiles** as a way to use existing data to describe student growth in ways that can incorporate more useful information than current growth reports. He offered examples of types of questions different stakeholders might ask of the data. He cautioned about the mistaken inferences that "value added" systems can lead to. He advised the Task Force to consider using growth measures as an indicator to identify schools in need of assistance, or, conversely, excelling. Scott presented the concept of growth percentile as a way to measure whether students are "growing" relative to expectations based on historical data of similar peers.

Tim Kurtz shared graphs using real NECAP data to show how growth percentiles would provide a measure of growth for individual students that is based on a robust collection of data. He explained that while there are targets/ standards for

proficiency in each year's tests, there is no standard for growth percentile, since the concept of percentile defines the outcome that half the students will have a growth percentile below the 50<sup>th</sup> and half over the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Brian Cochrane offered an example of how Nashua is doing its own data analysis to identify (using individual student data) where growth is occurring at a higher than district average rate. He cited examples where Nashua student performance by subgroups surpasses the state average for similar students, yet the current accountability system doesn't allow for differentiating in meaningful ways. Nashua's student population is a factor in the NECAP scores, but its relative success does not compare the city to those with similar populations.

Tim demonstrated how growth percentiles can be used to estimate future attainment based on past history of all students with a similar achievement history.

Scott offered some thoughts on considerations of 'adequacy' in the context of growth percentiles. While 90% growth is admirable, is it more 'adequate' than a high performing student who has a 10% growth percentile but remains in the exemplary range of achievement?

Tim described the information on the "bubble plot" slide which incorporates (a) size of school; (b) poverty rate of school; (c) percentage proficient; and (d) median growth percentile of students in the school. The four factors plotted on a grid reveals whether a school is lower growth, lower achievement (bottom left quadrant); higher growth, lower achievement (bottom right quadrant); lower growth, higher achievement (upper left quadrant); and higher growth, higher achievement (upper right quadrant). Scott pointed out the terms being used are relative; e.g., "higher" versus high; "lower" versus low. The choice is intentional because the data doesn't invest a value in the measure; a group responsible for standard setting would need to determine what counts as 'adequate' or insufficient.

Scott showed the Colorado site to demonstrate the capability of accessing detailed information about districts, schools, students, when a growth percentile measure is fully developed. Scott provided URL for the public Colorado website on slide 32.

Public: [https://cdeapps.cde.state.co.us/growth\\_model\\_public](https://cdeapps.cde.state.co.us/growth_model_public)

Q: How does the growth percentile help decide what is 'adequate'?

Discussion followed about the possibility this allows of expanding the system beyond the bare minimum of achievement or resources required for adequacy.

Ed Murdough described concerns that schools are required to provide the input components but not required to "perform," i.e., current regulations do not provide consequences if districts do not reach a certain level of academic achievement. There are likely to be cases when schools meet adequacy in the input system, yet their students do not achieve the results that meet whatever is defined as adequate for growth. Conversely, some schools will not meet all the input measures, yet

students will perform well on NECAP. Ed wondered “so what?” in either case? At present, there are applicable sanctions for failure to meet the school approval standards but no sanctions for not meeting performance expectations.

Deb noted that there currently are sanctions in both federal and state accountability laws based on performance, however, how the state law is interpreted has varied by Commissioner.

**Action Items:**

1. Deb will plan to present a draft of the input system at the December 18 Commissioner’s Task Force meeting.
2. All members are asked to provide input on the indicators to be included in the performance system.
3. Scott and Deb will bring in examples from other states’ performance systems.

**NEXT MEETING:** Friday, December 18, 2009, 9:00 – 12:00, NH Department of Education,

(the DOE AYP Task Force meets Tuesday, December 15)

Notes compiled and submitted 12.05.09, Karen Laba, NECC